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Chameleons In A Kaleidoscope

How it Feels to Work in Partnership as a Sure Start Manager



Helen Kara – PhD thesis

Open University, 2006

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Chameleons In A Kaleidoscope

How it Feels to Work in Partnership as a Sure Start Manager

Abstract

This thesis examines some ways in which the emotional experience of Sure Start managers can be understood using story methodology.

Sure Start was a partnership initiative introduced by New Labour in 1999 to support families with children aged 0–4 in areas of deprivation. Data was constructed using fictional stories about how it feels to work in partnership, told and used as a basis for discussion in peer groups.

Interpretation of the data suggested that Sure Start managers use discretion and judgement in the workplace to manage their own emotions and the emotions of others. However, their choices in doing this appear to be limited by the prevailing power structures. These include the lack of a professional emotional vocabulary, which effectively silences work-related emotion talk. The managers resist these limitations by finding ‘unmanageable spaces’ (Gabriel 2003) to share stories about their work in personal language. This helps them to make sense of their emotional experiences.

This research found that Sure Start managers needed to draw on a wide emotional range to create convincing emotional performances at work. This enriches the conceptualisation of emotional labour in the emotion literature, and offers performance as a new theme for the partnership literature. Initial suggestions for links between specific emotional responses and themes in the partnership literature offer a new area for exploration within that literature. The distinction between professional languages and personal language enhances the account of the relationship between emotion and language in the emotion literature.

Despite the limitations on them, Sure Start managers are evidently skilful, resourceful 'emotion entrepreneurs'. However, it seems that the

marginalisation of emotion in their working environment is likely to be detrimental to the well-being of the managers, their staff, and their service users. This has implications for the policy and practice of managing public sector partnerships.

Keywords: partnership, emotion, story, language.

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Chapter One – Introduction

Introduction

As a whole this thesis has a background formed from my struggle to make sense of my experience, of working as a researcher and consultant with public sector partnerships, by taking a reflexive approach to the research process and engaging in relevant theoretical debates. Its frame is made up of a number of components: partnership working, emotion, story, and language. Each of the background and framing aspects also appears, differently depicted, in the foreground of the picture, as will be shown in later chapters.

This introduction will start by sketching in the background of the picture and constructing its frame, and will include some outlines of parts of the picture itself. But first, in the box below is the central image of the picture, which may help to capture some of the elusiveness of the phenomena at the core of this research.

Imagine a chameleon in a kaleidoscope. You are looking into the kaleidoscope, into fractured shapes of rainbow colours. You can almost see that you are looking down a tube but your eye is continually deceived by the shifting, changing, myriad patterns that seem to disappear into the distance. Unseen hands are turning the kaleidoscope, gently, this way and that. And in the centre is a chameleon. It is still and its skin is almost reflecting the colours in the environment around it. But not quite. It's a beat behind, the visual equivalent of the sound of leather on willow heard moments after seeing the batsman hit a four on the other side of the field. The pattern in the kaleidoscope is predominantly blue, now; the chameleon green as it makes the transition from the previous yellow pattern. Just as the chameleon reaches turquoise, the pattern shifts again to red, and the chameleon strives for a sickly purple. And then again the unseen hands shake the kaleidoscope a little, yellow returns and the chameleon turns brown on its way to orange. It's trying, very hard, but it cannot keep up.

Background to the Research

In 2000–2003 I worked alongside a number of people who were acting as caretaker-managers for forthcoming Sure Start partnerships, each overseeing the six-month planning period of a local programme. These people came from local authority early years departments, social services departments, education departments, primary care trusts and voluntary sector organisations. Many of them were women; a few were from minority ethnic backgrounds; most were in their 30s and 40s. Their professional backgrounds were mostly from health and social care, but within that were very varied: there were teachers, health visitors, community development workers, social workers and many other professionals. What they had in common was a deep and abiding concern for the well-being of very young children and their families.

Some of these people went on to manage the Sure Start programmes they had helped to plan; other people recruited managers from the same range of backgrounds. In my role as a ‘free’ consultant paid for by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), with support for the acting or newly recruited Sure Start manager as an explicit part of my remit, I was well placed to witness the early professional development of all these Sure Start managers. I saw over 20 people go through the early stages of this process, at close quarters, including half of my eventual research participants.

Most of the Sure Start managers I worked with had come from a post in an organisation rather than a partnership. I observed them experiencing and adjusting to the differences in requirements from organisational posts, which usually had some managerial responsibilities, to managing the whole of a Sure Start partnership. Some of these changes were evidently about the difference in scale between an operational post, albeit often one with some managerial aspects, and a fully managerial post. The managers told me that others reflected the differences between working in an organisation and working in a partnership. Some of their previous organisational roles had included aspects of partnership working, but nothing had prepared them for the reality of the work they were faced with as a Sure Start manager, where they could be dealing with anyone from a

fractious two-year-old to a local authority chief executive. This or a similar example was given to me several times by incredulous postholders. Their descriptions of the difficulties they faced in managing the competing and ever-changing demands of their working environment led me to construct the image of the chameleon in the kaleidoscope, as shown in the box on the first page of this chapter, in an attempt to capture something of the complexity of the task they faced.

I witnessed many reactions to the complexity of the task facing newly appointed Sure Start managers. I saw them become excited and engaged, gasp and groan, exhibit passion and enthusiasm, laugh disbelievingly, celebrate triumphs, become exhausted and unwell, achieve an amazing amount in a short time, and go off work sick. But it was not until I began to develop personal friendships with some Sure Start managers that I realised they spoke very differently about their responses to their work outside the workplace than they did within it. Inside the workplace, Sure Start managers would say things like 'that was a very challenging board meeting', 'those architects are putting forward completely unrealistic ideas', or 'I feel we need to draw up a partnership agreement with the primary care trust'. Outside the workplace they made stories of these issues, replacing their professional-speak with sentences such as 'my chair upset me so badly at the board meeting that it was all I could do not to burst into tears', 'I was furious with those architects, I could have killed them', or 'I feel really threatened by the primary care trust trying to impose things on us in the name of partnership'. I became fascinated by the professional silence of Sure Start managers about the emotional aspects of their work, and by the difference between this and their personal abilities to articulate these aspects clearly and eloquently. It was as if they were speaking two different languages. It seemed to me that the tensions this caused were not helpful for the managers themselves, and were therefore perhaps also unhelpful for their staff and service users. Initial informal questioning indicated that Sure Start managers and their colleagues agreed with this assessment. I wanted to help to reduce this tension if I could, and wondered whether I could find a way if I studied it in detail through doctoral research.

I was working with other public sector partnerships as well as Sure Start at the time, both within and beyond children's services, as a consultant and as a researcher. I find partnership working endlessly interesting but feel continually frustrated by the narrow requirements of research commissioners. There is so much more to partnership working than mapping exercises, needs assessments and evaluations can reveal. It occurred to me that perhaps doing a PhD would offer a way for me to research something I found interesting, in a way that I chose, without the restrictions placed on me by a commissioner. From the very beginning, therefore, I have aimed to take as holistic an approach as possible to this research in an attempt to do justice to the complexity of the situation. This has caused problems that a more focused approach could have sidestepped (although I am sure a different approach would have brought problems of its own). Also, it is arguable that in the process of aiming for breadth of vision I have ultimately sacrificed depth of perception (Thompson 2000:87). Nevertheless, I would still contend that complex issues can be usefully explored in a wide-ranging, cross-disciplinary style, taking in as much as possible from previous research and academic theory, as well as making use of lived experience.

So in that spirit I began reading around the subjects of partnership working, emotion, and organisations. These bodies of literature offered some appealing reasons for studying the emotion of Sure Start managers beyond my own personal interest in the subject. Studies of emotion in organisation have shown that it is routinely excluded from professional life at all levels (e.g. Fineman 1993:1, Rafaeli and Worline 2001:97, Davies 2003:197). There is now a broad body of literature on UK public sector partnerships, including area-based initiatives (ABIs) with community involvement such as Sure Start (e.g. Balloch and Taylor 2001a, Glendinning, Powell and Rummary 2002, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). However, the emotional aspects of working in such partnerships have only just begun to be studied (e.g. Smith and Bryan 2005). Previous research into the emotional aspects of working in public sector organisations focused mainly on those at the 'sharp end' such as social workers (e.g. Fineman 1995) or nurses (e.g. Meerabeau and Page 1999). Research into the emotional aspects of managers' work has mostly taken place with participants from the private sector (e.g. Hochschild 1993).

So studying the emotional responses of Sure Start managers to their work could help to address these gaps in the literature.

Furthermore, the emotion literature suggested that emotional aspects of the work of Sure Start managers could prove to be particularly interesting. The pioneer of research into emotion in the workplace, Arlie Hochschild, identified two components of emotion management: managing one's own emotions, and managing the emotions of others (1983:7). As well as their own emotions, Sure Start managers also have to manage the emotions of around 40 staff in their own team; of service users including parents, carers, children and other members of the local community; and – albeit to a lesser extent – of anyone else they come into contact with, such as staff from partner agencies, senior managers, local and national government officials, and community members who do not use Sure Start services. It was evident that Sure Start managers did manage their own emotions and those of many others – but how did they do this?

As Sure Start managers responded to the changes foisted on them by the Government in 2003 through the advent of Children's Centres (see below for details), I saw them begin to experience their working world not only as complex but also as more and more ambiguous and uncertain. I started to wonder how they made sense of it all. The partnership literature did not seem to address this question: there was very little literature concerned with Sure Start, or with the 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 1983) or experience of the managers of ABIs. However, the literature on organisations suggested links between emotion, story or narrative, and sense-making (e.g. Gabriel 2000, Holman and Thorpe 2003, Cooren and Fairhurst 2003, Sims 2004). Were Sure Start managers using the stories they told in informal settings to help them make sense of their emotional and other experiences?

So, as my reading developed and I made links between the knowledge I had gained from my work and the knowledge others had gained from theirs, I was able to formulate some key research questions:

1. How do Sure Start managers manage their own feelings and emotions?

2. How do Sure Start managers manage the feelings and emotions of others?
3. How do Sure Start managers navigate through the complex, ambiguous and uncertain emotional experiences of partnership working?
4. How do Sure Start managers make sense of their emotional experiences?

These questions could have been applied to the managers of any ABI, but my personal closeness to Sure Start, combined with the lack of academic literature on the initiative, made it an obvious and appealing subject of study.

Theory: The Background

My own professional research and consultancy practice rarely provides opportunities for me to engage with academic theory. This was a gap in my personal knowledge and experience that undertaking doctoral research might help to fill. But the sheer volume of potential reading was daunting. It was necessary to select what would be most useful from the vast body of theoretical literature, in a way that was considered rather than arbitrary. And this would need to be done within the wide-ranging approach to the research, rather than narrowing in on one theorist or type of theory and using that as a lens through which to focus all the research. Perhaps the four key themes of the thesis – partnership working, emotion, story and language – could act as a frame for the theoretical literature. If the work of a theorist seemed directly relevant to one or more of these, it would be in the frame and so could be included. If not, it was out of the picture.

So this thesis draws on the work of sociological theorists (e.g. Lupton 1998, Shields 2002), emotion theorists (e.g. Hochschild 1983, Goleman 1996), organisation theorists (e.g. Fineman 1993, Gabriel 2000), partnership theorists (e.g. Newman 2001, Huxham and Vangen 2005), anthropological theorists (e.g. Irvine 1990, Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990), cross-disciplinary theorists (e.g. Melucci 1996, Craib 1998), psychological theorists (e.g. Zajonc 1980, Buck 1991), language theorists (e.g. Holman and Thorpe 2003, Crystal 2005), methodological theorists (e.g. Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000, Mauthner *et al* 2002) and narrative theorists (e.g. Patterson 2002, Riessman 2002a). Arguably, there are many other types of theory that could have been drawn on. For example, the focus on

emotion might lead to an expectation that psychoanalytic theory would be included. However, psychoanalytic theory focuses heavily on the individual's internal world and very little on people's interactions in context, and therefore does not fit with the wide-ranging approach; it does, however, inform the work of theorists whose work has been included, e.g. Lupton (1988) and Froggett (2002). In another example, my personal feminist perspective (see chapter 4 for details) might have led to an expectation that feminist theory would be central to this research. However, feminist theory as such primarily addresses issues stemming from gender, and including gender as a fifth key theme seemed likely to broaden the already broad approach to the research a little too far. However, again, feminist theory does inform the work of others who have been included, e.g. Newman (2001) and Mauthner *et al* (2002).

Although the aim was not to find a single theorist or type of theory whose work could provide a lens for the whole of this research, the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, who developed a theory of hermeneutic interpretation, came to underpin the work. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpreting written texts, and was originally devised by 16th-century philosophers struggling over interpretations of Biblical texts (Fay 1996:142). Over the last five centuries a variety of hermeneutic approaches have been developed and hermeneutics 'now has many meanings' (Crusius 1991:3). A number of commentators have put forward different typologies of hermeneutics (e.g. Crusius 1991:5–6). Broadly, there appears to be a divide between 'positive' philosophical or ontological hermeneutics, based on the work of Heidegger, Ricoeur and Gadamer, and 'negative' or deconstructive 'hermeneutics of suspicion', stemming from the work of Nietzsche and Derrida (Hekman 1986:92, Kinneavy 1991:xii). But all are based around attempts to interpret texts. These are mostly written texts, although the word 'text' has come to be used more widely in the process.

Hekman compares the approaches of Gadamer and Derrida, and finds some overlaps. For example, both reject the notion of an ultimate foundation for truth, both make it clear that they are not attempting to offer a method for philosophy or for the social sciences, and neither accepts the principle that an author's intention

can define the meaning of a text (Hekman 1986:193). But there are also very significant differences.

Derrida's approach involves the deconstruction of texts, identities, theories etc, by reducing them to their component parts or 'signs'. In the case of written text, the text itself is seen as all-important, with the author's intentions, the subject of the text, and the context within which the text is studied all regarded as irrelevant. Ideas such as the development of knowledge, or emancipation through knowledge, are viewed as illusions (Delanty 1999:102–3). This is a radical approach that has proved very influential in fields such as literary theory and criticism, media studies and social theory (Hekman 1986:192). Even confirmed Gadamerians acknowledge the importance of this approach, although for them it is only a part of the interpretative process rather than the process as a whole (e.g. Crusius 1991:8,47).

Gadamer's approach, by contrast, emphasises the importance of context for interpretation. 'Context' is given a wide meaning and includes the external contexts of time and place as well as the internal context of the interpreter's preconceived ideas. He also emphasises the importance of language, stating that the entire process of interpretation is linguistic (Gadamer 1975:345) (this will be discussed in more detail in chapters 3 and 4). So, for Gadamer, any interpretation will depend on historical, geographical and temporal context, the language(s) used, the preconceived ideas of the interpreter, and the interpreter's ability to assess their own interpretation against their preconceived ideas – and vice versa. A truthful, non-arbitrary interpretation is either one that holds up when it is examined against the interpreter's existing ideas, or one that causes a change in those ideas: a new understanding. For Gadamer, the craft of interpretation resides in the dialogic act of assessing existing understanding against new information (Gadamer 1975:236–7).

Because of the emphasis on context, in Gadamer's approach there can be no definitive, final, correct interpretation of any text (Crusius 1991:6, Gergen 1994:193, Fay 1996:143). Yet there is rigour in his approach. The interpreter must 'examine explicitly the legitimacy, i.e. the origin and validity, of the fore-

meanings present within him [*sic*]’ (Gadamer 1975:237). If this examination is made explicit, anyone seeking to evaluate the interpretation will be able to take into account the preconceived ideas of the interpreter (although of course they can only do so to the extent that their own preconceived ideas permit). This is what is now called ‘reflexivity’ or ‘reflexive working’. The process began in the first section of this chapter, permeates the entire research process, and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

The Gadamerian approach can therefore provide a helpful theoretical underpinning for the interpretative, reflexive work of the qualitative social researcher. The researcher interprets academic literature and primary data, aiming to produce interpretations that are far from arbitrary but do not claim to be definitive. And while no interpreter can ever provide a complete picture (Crusius 1991:14), the researcher can help those who will be reading and interpreting his or her research by giving information about the context for the research process and for his or her own interpretations. That is the purpose of the first section of this chapter and of chapter 8.

That is the background for the research. Now I will consider each key theme in turn – partnership working, emotion, story and language – before giving an outline of the thesis.

Partnership Working

One particular form of partnership that has been developed over the last 20 years is the ABI. There have been many ABIs in the last two decades, such as Health Action Zones, Education Action Zones, New Deal for Communities, Single Regeneration Budget partnerships, and Sure Start. Each of these initiatives aims to reduce geographical inequalities of deprivation and social exclusion with involvement from the local community. There has been considerable interest in these partnerships from the academic community, resulting in a significant body of literature (e.g. Barnes and Sullivan 2002, Dickson *et al* 2002, Lawless 2003 and Rhodes, Tyler and Brennan 2003). However, papers focusing on Sure Start have only recently begun to appear (e.g. Gustafsson and Driver 2005, Smith and Bryan

2005, Glass 2006). It may, therefore, be helpful to outline the context and history of Sure Start here.

Sure Start was an ABI introduced by the New Labour government in 1999, intended to bring a variety of public sector professionals together with local communities to improve the life chances of parents-to-be and families with preschool children in areas of deprivation (DfES 2002:3). Since its election in 1997, New Labour has overseen a period of enormous and rapid change in the public sector, with particular emphasis on partnership working. When Clarke and Newman were writing about the 'managerial state' in 1997, they were focusing primarily on organisations as public sector partnership working was still in its infancy. By the beginning of the next century, Huxham and Vangen, focusing mainly on the public and not-for-profit sectors at that time, were able to describe partnerships as 'a commonplace part of institutional life' (2000:772). Partnerships had been created at government level such as the Social Exclusion Unit (Wade and Barnett 1999:113) and the Sure Start Unit (Glass 1999, cited at <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/doc/P0001720.doc>); at strategic inter-agency level such as Drug Action Teams and Health Action Zones (South and Teeman 1999:70), and at operational level involving service user representatives such as Area Child Protection Committees (DOH/HO/DfEE 1999:35–6) and local Sure Start partnerships (DfES 2002:12). Analysis of policy documents shows that at this stage, partnerships brought organisations together, but that new Government initiatives soon began to create partnerships that involved other partnerships. For example, Quality Protects was a partnership initiative launched in 1998 with £375 million funding for three years and extended in 2000 to five years with another £510 million funding (Laurent 2001:14). Quality Protects was intended to improve the effectiveness of children's social services (Department of Health 1999:1) by linking social services departments with other local authority departments including education, housing, leisure, the NHS, and voluntary sector agencies, and with partnerships such as Youth Offending Teams (Department of Health 1999:2–3). Quality Protects partnerships also regularly included representatives from other partnerships such as Health Action Zones, Community Safety Partnerships and Sure Start partnerships.

Sure Start partnerships were first implemented in 1999 and were unusual in a number of ways. Funding for Sure Start was established through the innovative cross-cutting spending review of services for young children involving eleven different Government departments and four different Government units, including the Departments of Education and Employment (as it then was), Health, Social Security, the Treasury and the Home Office (Glass 1999). This funding was generous and was committed for up to ten years, which was unusually long-term for such an ABI. The implementation of Sure Start was managed by a multi-disciplinary team of civil servants from the Treasury, Department for Education and Employment¹, Department of Health and Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (as it then was) (ibid). I was told in 2001 by senior civil servants that it was the first initiative ever to be managed centrally by such a partnership, although I have not been able to substantiate this information.

Each Sure Start partnership was managed by a board, akin to the board of trustees of a voluntary sector organisation, which was required to include service users in the form of local parents and community members as well as professional statutory and voluntary sector representatives. This board had the power to make final decisions about the partnership's management, including its financial management. Each partnership employed its own staff from a variety of professional backgrounds such as health visiting, community development, nursery teaching, the voluntary sector, midwifery and administration, as well as a manager to lead the partnership. In these respects Sure Start partnerships were unusually autonomous, and as each partnership also had its own dedicated building, they could look from the outside more like organisations than partnerships. (This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.)

Each Sure Start partnership was required to meet targets from the Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA), such as to reduce the number of pregnant women smoking and to increase the number of new babies being breastfed, but to do so in an appropriate way for the local area (DfES 2002:4–5). For each Sure Start partnership, existing statutory or voluntary sector agencies would take the role of 'lead body', responsible for planning and setting up the partnership, and

¹ Now the DfES

'accountable body', responsible for managing the partnership's money and administering the employment of its staff. The way this was done was also locally determined (ibid:8). In some cases the same agency played both roles, in other cases two agencies worked together. In some local authorities one agency acted as lead and accountable body for all the Sure Start partnerships in all rounds; in others, different agencies acted for different partnerships. There were even a few examples where a Sure Start partnership was led by another existing partnership (Ball 2002:32). I witnessed some local authorities using forethought and making deliberate choices about how they managed this process, while in others an ad hoc approach was evident.

Emotion

Partly because of the relative autonomy of Sure Start partnerships, the manager's position was quite isolated, as if at the thinnest point of an hourglass (appendix 1). Below were the partnership's staff, other professionals working in the area and the local community. Above were the lead and accountable bodies, the board, the local authority, the regional team at the regional Government office, the central team at the Sure Start Unit in London, the national evaluation team and the Government. As a result of the unusual levels of autonomy available to Sure Start managers, the post largely seemed to attract intelligent individualists, self-motivated people full of ideas, hard workers who were highly committed to the well-being of families with preschool children: perfect examples of 'public officials ... who care too much' (Hoggett 2005:185). The Government guidelines were not too onerous, the remit was uncommonly flexible, innovation was welcomed, and there was more money in the budget than usual. Experience of working with Sure Start managers during this period suggested that they worked very hard and often expressed feelings of isolation, but were enthusiastic about the job despite its demands.

In 2003 this began to change. In June 2003 the Cabinet post of Minister for Children was created (Moss 2004:6). In September 2003 the green paper *Every Child Matters* was published, stating that Children's Centres would be created in each of the country's 20% most deprived neighbourhoods to provide nursery

education, family support, employment advice, childcare and health services (HMSO 2003:7). In his December 2003 prebudget report, Chancellor Gordon Brown announced the Government's long-term plan to create a Children's Centre in every community (Moss 2004:4). Local authorities were given strategic responsibility for developing Children's Centres from existing provision, including Sure Start partnerships (ibid).

Experience of working with Sure Start managers during this period suggested that these changes caused managers to worry about losing their autonomy, at best, or their jobs, at worst. The data collection for this research took place within the period of apparent highest uncertainty for Sure Start managers, between late 2003 and early 2005. During this period, I noticed that many Sure Start managers appeared to move from being highly motivated, vocal and active to feeling depressed, powerless and apathetic. This seemed to be a direct result of the unexpected changes in their working conditions, the uncertainty that caused, and the likelihood that they would not be able to complete the tasks they initially signed up to achieve.

It is widely acknowledged that change in the workplace engenders a broad range of feelings and emotions that are challenging to manage (e.g. Cockman, Evans and Reynolds 1999:240, Jones 2003:2, Smith and Bryan 2005:204). The pace of change in public services generally, and services for children and families in particular, seems to have speeded up considerably since Labour came to power in 1997 – and to be still increasing. New legislation, guidance and reports are constantly being produced. Recent examples include: Sure Start planning and delivery guidance (1999–2006), guidance on working together to safeguard children (DoH/HO/DfEE 1999 and HM Government 2005a), Lord Laming's report into the death of Victoria Climbié (Laming 2003), *Every Child Matters* (HM Government 2003), children's centres guidance (DfES 2003, Sure Start Unit 2005), revision of the 1989 Children Act leading to the Children Act 2004; *Every Child Matters: The Next Steps* (DfES 2004a), *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (DfES 2004b), guidance on working with the voluntary and community sector 'to deliver change for children and young people' (DfES 2004c), the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services

(DoH 2004), guidance on interagency co-operation to improve the wellbeing of children (HM Government 2005a), the 'prospectus' for extended schools (DfES 2005), *Youth Matters* (HM Government 2005b), and the Childcare Bill which is going through parliament at the time of writing. This is by no means an exhaustive list. Also, much of this guidance is very long and detailed: for example, the National Service Framework is made up of several different documents, and the 2005 version of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* runs to 200 pages. This means that there is a great deal of information for managers in organisations and partnerships to absorb and respond to. But within this proliferation of information, there has been little information about what impact Children's Centres would have in practice on existing Sure Start partnerships (NESS 2005:140–141) and nothing about the emotional impact of the changes on Sure Start managers, or on the staff or service users whose emotions those managers also had to manage. Nor, until Smith and Bryan's paper in 2005, was the issue of emotion in Sure Start partnerships addressed in the academic literature.

Story

But in the cafés, pubs, kitchens and living rooms where Sure Start managers and I met informally, there had always been endless stories of how it felt to do the job they were doing. Stories of triumphs and disasters, gains and losses, heroes and villains; funny stories, sad stories, thought-provoking stories; stories that were fascinating, depressing and entertaining. Some were improvised and some rehearsed; some were told by one person, others by two or more; some were fragmented or partial, others complete. But all of these stories expressed and shared the emotions that, I was coming to suspect, the managers could not express or share when speaking their professional language.

As discussed above, I found that the academic literature on organisations supported the idea of a link between story and emotion. The methodology literature suggested that story could be used as a method of data construction (e.g. Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999, Labonte, Feather and Hills 2000, Abma 2003). After much reading and thinking, I devised and piloted the Multi-Story Method (MSM), in which a small group of people take it in turns to tell a

fictional but authentic story on a given topic and then discuss the issues raised by the story in its own terms. I used the MSM with three groups of four Sure Start managers, giving them the topic 'How does it feel to work in partnership as a Sure Start manager?'. This method yielded quantities of rich data on the varied emotional working lives of Sure Start managers. Three coding frames were used with the data: one emergent coding frame, based on my experience, understanding, feelings and knowledge; one based on the partnership and emotion literatures reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, and one based on the narrative analysis literature. Interpretation of the coded data provided enough information to enable initial answers to the research questions. (Methods of data collection, construction and interpretation used, and the distinction between 'story' and 'narrative', will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.)

Language

Following Gadamer, this research focuses on language in context. Organisations, and I would assert therefore also partnerships, are primarily created and maintained through written and spoken language (Cooren and Fairhurst 2004:804). A review of written academic and policy literature forms the basis for the context-setting chapters on partnership (chapter 2) and emotion (chapter 3). Data was constructed using spoken language, converted into written language by a process of transcription, and analysed using language to code and frame the data. This process is outlined in chapter 4. Spoken language was chosen as the medium for data construction because of its close links to emotion (Crystal 2005:76,463). During the data construction process, some notes were taken of participants' body language, and during the transcription process, notes were taken of pauses. It was also evident that one participant in each group spoke less than the others. Silence can be a way of exercising power (Noble 1999:195), and it is potentially interesting in this context that all three of the quieter participants were male, as there is a well-established relationship between power and gender (e.g. Radtke and Stam 1994). However, there is insufficient data available to draw any conclusions from this, as the sample was small and the main focus of the data interpretation was on the meanings that could be divulged from the spoken language converted into text. Data interpretation, covered in chapters 5 and 6,

was therefore conducted as written interpretations of written data. A discussion of the research process, taking the interpretations further in the light of the literature reviewed, is given in chapter 7.

The particular form of spoken language selected to catalyse the data construction process was the oral story. The story is a linguistic form that is intimately linked to the expression and creation of emotion, as discussed in chapter 3. It was recognised early in the research process, from initial data collection and analysis using traditional research techniques, that the professional language of the public sector – and therefore of Sure Start – had an impoverished emotional vocabulary (full details in chapter 4). The words available to people bound the nature of their thinking (Rheingold 1988:4), so Sure Start managers in their professional personas – and therefore restricted to their professional vocabularies – found it very difficult to speak of their emotions. The use of fictional but authentic stories enabled them to access and discuss their feelings and emotions, and to create and share meaning.

The initial intention was simply to use stories as a springboard for discussion. However, the narrative analysis literature suggested that discussion could also contain stories. Investigation of the data in the light of the narrative analysis literature uncovered 108 identifiable stories within the 12 discussions. Interpretation of these stories enabled a fuller exploration of the emotional experience of Sure Start managers. This will be outlined in chapters 6 and 7.

As with most research, this thesis is also written as a story. It has a narrative structure with clear links from one section to the next, one chapter to the next. It aims to tell the story of the research from beginning to end in a way that will be coherent for a reader. It does not, of course, tell everything that could be told; that is not possible (Lemert 1999:440). And because of the reliance on language, as well as the difference between a reader's preconceived ideas and the writer's, it may be difficult for a reader to analyse what has been left out. This is also difficult for the writer, as people's conscious choices about communication through writing or speech are never completely within their own control (Crystal 2005:282). In an attempt to create more opportunities for wider understanding, chapter 8 of this

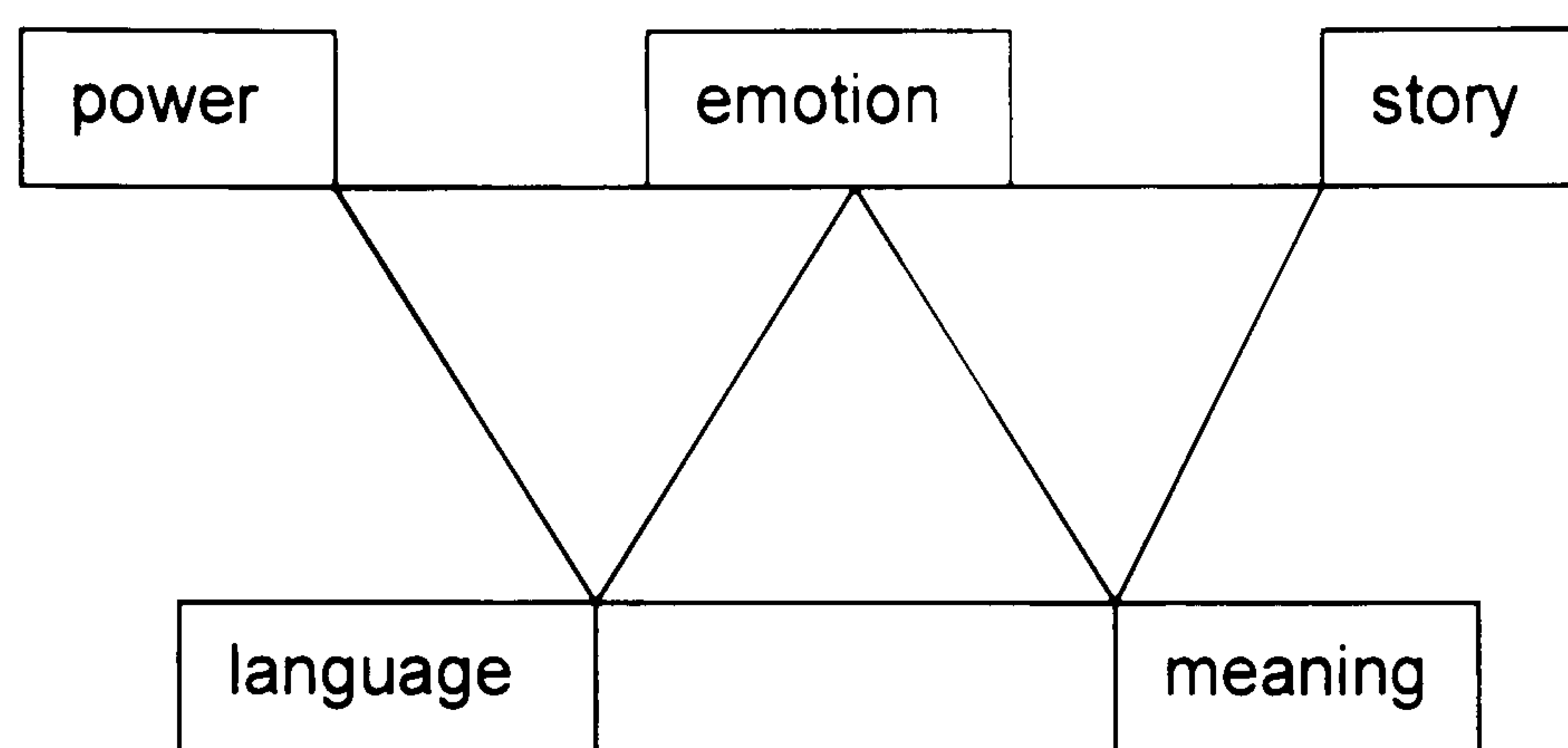
thesis has been written as a fictional but authentic story, reflecting on some of my own feelings and emotions about the research process. Taking these seriously is intended to strengthen the research, as my feelings and emotions are an integral part of my work (McLaughlin 2003:69). The research could be strengthened further through this story if it enables readers to understand and share some of my feelings and emotions, as well as generating others of their own that could serve as a basis for discussion.

Contribution

So what contribution could this thesis make to knowledge and to practice? The potential for contribution is three-fold: to academic knowledge, to social research practice, and to public sector management policy and practice.

In terms of academic knowledge, most of my findings are in alignment with the existing partnership or emotion literature. The few remaining findings offer potential contributions to these literatures. For example, I have established that the theme of performance, as an individual method of managing choices about showing and hiding emotions in the workplace, does not seem to be featured in the partnership literature. I also found that people working as Sure Start managers need a wide emotional range to draw on to create convincing emotional performances, and this enriches the conceptualisation of emotional labour found in the emotion literature. Also, I have made initial suggestions for links between the themes in the partnership literature and specific emotional responses, and this offers a new area for exploration within the partnership literature. The relationship between emotion, professional language and personal language is highlighted in chapter 5, which adds another dimension to the account of the relationship between language and emotion found in the emotion literature. As shown in chapter 6, the focus on the emotional dimension of partnership working enabled me to conceptualise a triad of three-way links between power, emotion and language; language, emotion, and meaning; and story, emotion and meaning, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Triad of Three-Way Links



These relationships were discussed in more detail in chapter 7, and chapter 9 suggested ways in which they could be explored further, offering potential contributions to both the partnership and emotion literatures. Furthermore, the use of stories has proved to be fruitful in researching emotions in partnership settings, as it has been for many years in researching emotions in organisational settings, and this offers another potential contribution to the partnership literature.

With respect to social research practice, the use of fictional stories as vehicles for data construction is innovative, as is the use of different coding frames with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software for the data interpretation. The methods of data construction and interpretation used for this research may offer a small contribution to the burgeoning debate on new qualitative research methods (Rapport 2004:12–13).

When the research was planned in late 2002 and early 2003, the plans for Children's Centres had not been publicised, and indications were that Sure Start managers would remain in position for a further 8–10 years. I hoped to raise awareness and understanding of the contribution that Sure Start managers' emotions can make to the work they do, and conversely how ignoring the emotional contribution of such managers can adversely affect the work they do, and therefore ultimately have a detrimental impact on the users of the services they manage. All Sure Start programmes became Children's Centres in April 2006, so there can now be no direct contribution to the work of Sure Start managers. However, although this research has been distinctive in taking Sure

Start managers as its focus of study, many of its findings are in alignment with the partnership literature, so what has been learned is likely to apply in other partnership contexts.

This thesis will demonstrate that Sure Start managers were, and needed to be, skilled emotion managers. Yet it appears that they became 'emotion entrepreneurs' despite a working environment in which emotion is marginalized while implicit feeling rules abound. There is no mention of emotion in their job descriptions or in the official policy guidance documents they are expected to work from. Their supervision arrangements often seem to be unsatisfactory. As emotion plays a key role in such managerial necessities as reasoning (McLaughlin 2003:68) and decision-making (Bechara 2004:30), it seems short-sighted at best to continue to marginalise it. So, with regard to public sector management policy and practice, it is hoped that the findings of this research will contribute to the professional acknowledgment of emotion's central role in the management of children's services and public sector partnerships.

Thesis Outline

So, to recap, the remaining chapters will be structured as follows:

Chapter 2 will review some of the relevant academic and policy literature on partnership working.

Chapter 3 will review some of the relevant academic literature on emotion, both general theoretical literature and literature on emotion in organisations.

Chapter 4 will describe the methodology used for this research.

Chapter 5 will provide a thematic interpretation of the data based on the first two coding frames.

Chapter 6 will provide a story interpretation of the data based on the third coding frame.

Chapter 7 will bring together some of the themes from the data interpretation in chapters 5 and 6, and consider them in the light of the literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3. It will then use an interpretative approach to begin to address the research questions.

Chapter 8 will take a reflexive look at the research process.

Chapter 9 will conclude the thesis by bringing together all the topics discussed in the earlier chapters, considering some of the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, and looking forward to possible avenues for future research.

Conclusion

Partnership and emotion are both slippery, wiggly subjects that are difficult to delineate. Attempts to study them raise issues of terminology, definition, interpretation and meaning. These will be discussed more fully in later chapters. Throughout this thesis context is taken as one key to understanding and open-mindedness another. As time passes and more is learned, the context changes and so new interpretations can be made. This does not render existing interpretations meaningless or pointless; they may continue to be useful. It does, however, mean that an existing interpretation, however satisfying or convincing, can never be regarded as definitive.

This chapter has given the reflexive and theoretical background to this research. It has outlined the history and context of Sure Start, explained what a Sure Start partnership is, and discussed why the emotional labour of its managers might be an interesting subject of study. The chapter has outlined how such research could be done using story and language as investigative tools. It has discussed what contribution the research might make to knowledge, understanding and practice, and has given an overview of the structure of this thesis. The next chapter will expand on this context-setting by reviewing some relevant academic and policy literature on partnership working.

Chapter Two – Partnership Working

Introduction

The focus of this thesis is how it feels to work as a manager of a Sure Start partnership. This chapter will draw on the academic literature on partnership working, Government policy documents, and my own experience of working with Sure Start managers from 2000 to 2005. The aim is to outline part of the context for the participants' experiences and for my interpretations of their experiences (which will be covered in detail in chapters 5 and 6).

In the Introduction to this thesis, the context for today's public sector partnerships and the history of Sure Start were briefly reviewed. This chapter will consider whether Sure Start is really a partnership or an organisation in disguise. Then some of the relevant themes appearing in the academic and policy literatures about working in partnership in general, and managing partnerships in particular, will be reviewed. These include power, trust, complexity, communication and identity. The barriers to and enablers of partnership working are also prominent in the literature and will be discussed as part of the context-setting process. As these themes are reviewed, differences between the academic and policy literatures will be assessed, and then some of the implications of these differences for managing Sure Start partnerships will be outlined.

The terminology of partnership working is imprecise and confusing (e.g. Braye 2000:9, Hudson 2000:255, Miller, Freeman and Ross 2001:3). This can cause difficulties in writing, thinking and talking about the subject. For clarity, therefore, I will use the term 'partnership working' to indicate a situation where people from two or more disciplines, organisations, sectors – or even partnerships – come together to address a task or issue. As shown in the Introduction there is a huge range of public sector partnerships, so one danger of using the term in this way is that it could have a homogenizing effect. However, as this thesis focuses on the management of Sure Start partnerships alone, the clarity achieved seems worth the risk.

Sure Start: Partnership or Organisation?

Sure Start partnerships resemble organisations in a number of ways. Each Sure Start partnership now has its own building, its own manager, its own budget and its own staff and volunteers. Sure Start could even be said to have developed its own culture, as organisations do (e.g. Lovell and Cordeaux 1999:87, Gabriel 2000:2, Parker 2000). This culture is often described as the 'Sure Start ethos' (Eisenstadt 2002:4, NESS 2005:19) or 'Sure Start principles' (DfES 2002:6). Its central features are achieving better overall outcomes for children through working in local partnerships that involve service users, resulting in local solutions being found to national problems (DfES 2002:12, Eisenstadt 2002:4).

But there are also a number of ways in which Sure Start partnerships differ from organisations. Some of these are concrete, such as the fact that Sure Start partnerships employ multi-agency staff teams that aim to work with families in a holistic way (NESS 2005:22). Others are more abstract. For example, the distribution of power across the boundaries of Sure Start partnerships, with their dependence on many organisations and groups, is different from that across the boundaries of organisations which like to 'work independently and preserve their traditional territories' (Balloch and Taylor 2001b:288). Then, within Sure Start partnerships, the Sure Start culture explicitly gave more power to service users (i.e. parents), and to the new partnership as a whole, than many of its members would have done if left to themselves – and, in the process, removed the choice of organisations to work independently within the Sure Start context. This is shown in the Government guidance, which says, for example:

No single group should dominate proceedings and care must be taken to ensure all partners, and in particular parents, are able to make their voices heard. (DfES 2002:12)

This indicates that if enough 'care' is 'taken', every voice in the partnership can be heard. But reducing power imbalances in a partnership like Sure Start may not be quite so simple.

Power

The balance of power between agencies and groups within partnerships has been found to be dynamic, not static (Huxham and Vangen 2005:178–9) and this is the case with Sure Start partnerships (Ball 2002:32,38). Some commentators are suspicious of the idea that power can truly be redistributed through inclusive partnership (e.g. Byrne 2001:257, Froggett 2002:27). Others assert that, to some extent at least, power could be redistributed in this way (e.g. Forester 1999:9, Mayo and Taylor 2001:53, Robinson and Shaw 2003:30). There is some evidence that in Sure Start power has been redistributed (e.g. NESS 2005:19,22,118–119), although others might question how far this really goes (e.g. Beresford and Hoban 2005:25, Gustafsson and Driver 2005:541). Sure Start partnerships seem to have been a temporary and partial exception to the general trend of community care becoming more centrally managed, as discussed above. To that extent some power was genuinely dispersed, but not so far that it could not be taken back again through the advent of Children's Centres (NESS 2005:137).

From the discussion so far, it could seem that 'power' is a one-dimensional concept. In fact different types of power are conceptualised in different ways by different academic writers on partnership. Some draw on academic conceptions of power from outside the partnership field, such as the work of Lukes (1974, cited by Mayo and Taylor 2001) or Freire (1998, cited by Byrne 2001). Lukes suggested three dimensions of power: the power to make decisions, the power to shape or limit the agenda within which decisions are made, and the power to influence people's desires and therefore define the terms for debate (Mayo and Taylor 2001:40–41). Freire put forward the concept of empowerment, which for him was a non-negotiable redistribution of power until everyone was equally empowered (Byrne 2001:256).

Other academic writers on partnership formulate their own conceptions of power. For example, Forester distinguishes three types of power as 'political-economic, bureaucratic, and social power' (1999:9). He describes power as 'a political, and thus alterable, reality' that exists within a 'political world' incorporating 'foreseeable relationships of power' (ibid). Huxham and Vangen conceptualise power as multi-

dimensional but centred around a continuum from power-over (use of power for one's own gain) through power-to (use of power for mutual gain) to power-for (use of power for altruistic ends) (2005:175).

Most of the policy literature, by contrast, does not mention power in these terms at all. For example, there is no mention of power in the Children's Centres guidance published in 2003. In the 75-page Sure Start strategic and delivery guidance for 2004–2006 there is just one mention, in an appendix, of Sure Start's potential to contribute to the national regeneration agenda by 'empowering families' (Sure Start Unit 2004:24). There are a few mentions of power in Sure Start evaluations, based on participants raising the subject (e.g. Ball 2002:38,48; NESS 2005:20,23,93,118,120,123–4,126,150). These, again, are mostly framed in terms of empowerment. There are hardly any mentions of power in partnership working toolkits, although one does acknowledge that 'partnership working... can be... empowering' (GOSE 2003:7).

Trust

In much of the academic literature, trust is closely linked to power and is seen as an essential feature of successful partnership working (e.g. Hudson and Hardy 2002:57, Rummery 2002:232, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:102, McEvily, Perrone and Zaheer 2003:99, Vangen and Huxham 2003:6, Dowling, Powell and Glendinning 2004:313). However, trust is not mentioned in the policy literature, except in evaluations where the subject was raised by participants (e.g. Ball 2002:38,45–46,48,58; NESS 2005:33–35). Empirical research has shown that trust in a team's leader appears to have a direct effect on that team's performance, and can be critical for their effectiveness (Dirks 2000:1008–1009). Dirks studied American basketball teams, but early evaluation of Sure Start indicates that similar principles apply, with more trust being placed in many Sure Start managers by their partnerships than would be given to a statutory sector employee at a similar level, and progress for the partnership seeming more difficult where this does not happen (Ball 2002:48).

Huxham and Vangen carried out empirical action research in collaborative organisations, mostly from the public sector. They found an apparent link between perceived power imbalances and mistrust (Huxham and Vangen 2000:773, Vangen and Huxham 2003:13). They suggest that building and sustaining trust in a complex, ambiguous and dynamic partnership environment is a real challenge for managers (Vangen and Huxham 2003:22). However, they point out that lack of trust does not necessarily lead to failure (ibid:26). A recent study of Sure Start's implementation identified trust among partners as an important contributory factor for a successful Sure Start partnership (NESS 2005:7).

Complexity

We have seen that the partnership working landscape is a complex and uncertain one. Partnerships such as Sure Start are also complex. Many layers, dimensions and variables are woven together within such a partnership. For example, organisations are represented in the partnership by individuals. If an individual board member or staff member changes – takes a new job, goes on maternity leave, retires – the relationship between the partnership and that organisation may also change (Hudson and Hardy 2002:57). Huxham and Vangen, in their work with many different partnerships, found that there was often limited understanding of who the members of a partnership were, with confusion about whether they were the individuals attending meetings or the organisations they represented. This was exacerbated by lack of clarity in the relationships between individual members and organisational members, the status of individual members, what exactly they represented and why (Huxham and Vangen 2000:777). Huxham and Vangen identified this lack of clarity as a potential barrier to effective partnership working. Similarly, Hudson and Hardy suggest that common understanding of the need for partnership, and of the 'interdependencies' of partners, is an essential prerequisite for successful partnership working. They also regard it as important for partnership members to know about each other's own domains, where core business is carried out without involving other partners. But unless there is full appreciation of 'the extent to which agencies depend upon one another to achieve organisational goals', they suggest, effective partnership working is unlikely to happen (2002:53–54).

Communication

Vangen and Huxham see communication as a key feature of establishing and maintaining trust (2003:24), as do Clarke and Rummery (2002:73). And of course it is wider than that: communication is viewed as being an essential part of partnership working in general, in both the academic and policy literatures (e.g. Doherty and Harland 2001:115, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:100–101, GOSE 2003:14). Froggett postulates a link between power imbalances and distorted communication (2002:160). Good communication has been linked with trust in Sure Start (NESS 2005:33), and there is evidence that the communication skills of Sure Start managers are key to their success (ibid:25–26).

Identity

Organisations, teams and partnerships can develop distinct identities, as do individuals. And the identity of a working individual is often closely bound up with the nature of their employment (Beech and Huxham 2003:37). But identity is not a discrete and stable ‘thing’; it can be viewed as constructed and changeable (Craib 1998:4). The external or social identities of individuals can be many and varied, while the construction of someone’s internal or personal identity is a continual process of negotiation (Craib 1998:4) or narration and discourse (Maguire *et al* 2001:305). The identities of partnerships can also be viewed as constructed through a continual process of discussion, training, and externally imposed status (Beech and Huxham 2003:46–47). The identities of individuals within a partnership are inextricably linked with the identity of the partnership itself in a complex and ever-changing cycle (Beech and Huxham 2003:45). And identity, like partnership, is complex, ambiguous and changeable (Maguire *et al* 2001:305).

It seems that these issues were recognised by the Sure Start Unit. Partnerships were required from the start to ‘develop a distinct sense of identity and shared purpose’ (DfES 2002:12). A progress report was requested, approximately three months after the formation of the partnership, to include details of ‘how you feel your partnership is working, what you have done to encourage partnership working

and whether you have faced any particular difficulties' (ibid:13). The full plan, approximately six months after the formation of the partnership, was expected to give full details of the partnership and its operation, including 'how the partnership will continue to work after the plan is approved to ensure that strategic links with other initiatives are maintained and lessons learned from Sure Start are fed back into mainstream services' (ibid:15). The full plan also had to include the signatures of every individual involved in the Sure Start partnership, and to be accompanied by signed statements of support and commitment from the most senior managers in all the key statutory and voluntary agencies. The idea behind this was to pin down who was in the partnership and what their roles were. However, it seems to have been only partially successful, as a Sure Start evaluation document in 2005 identified a need for each partnership member to understand the basis for their involvement, the parameters of their responsibility and the nature of their relationships with the partnership and with each other (NESS 2005:29).

Barriers and Enablers

There are many discussions and reviews of barriers and enablers to partnership working in the academic literature (e.g. Newman 2001:112–116, Hudson and Hardy 2002:52–62, Ling 2002, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:110–116, Huxham and Vangen 2005:10–14). Identified barriers include conflicting agendas (Ling 2002:639–640) and conflicting values (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:111, Hoggett 2005), existing organisational and professional cultures (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:110), prioritising individual or organisational self-interest over the interests of the partnership (Hudson and Hardy 2002:59), and unforeseen external change (Newman 2001:112, Hudson and Hardy 2002:57). Identified enablers include shared objectives (Newman 2001:115, Hudson and Hardy 2002:55), a flexible, adaptable approach (Newman 2001:116), identifying and, where possible, reducing power imbalances (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:111–2, Huxham and Vangen 2005:37), building and maintaining trust (Hudson and Hardy 2002:57, Huxham and Vangen 2005:37), and clear communication (Huxham and Vangen 2005:37).

Some of these writers also focus on the tensions between barriers and enablers, seeing them as opposite ends of a spectrum rather than separate poles. Ling takes a structural approach, proposing four 'dimensions of joined-up working': within each organisation, between organisations, service delivery, and accountability – or 'inwards, outwards, downwards and upwards' (2002:625). Newman takes a process approach, suggesting 'four principal imperatives which influence partnership working': accountability (clear structures, roles and procedures), pragmatism (getting things done), flexibility (adapting to change) and sustainability (ensuring long-term development) (2001:113). For both Ling and Newman, more emphasis on one dimension or imperative means a pull away from one or more of the others. For example, Ling points out that effective service delivery often requires local knowledge and therefore dialogue with and empowerment of local communities. This can change the pattern of accountability so that 'those who are formally accountable will lose the capacity to determine policy' (2002:631): accountability is no longer solely 'upwards', but somewhere between up and down. Newman gives several other examples, such as that a 'pragmatic focus on the delivery of short-term goals may limit sustainability by inhibiting capacity-building within partner organisations or with local communities' (2001:114).

'How to Do It' – Partnership Working Toolkits

A number of Government offices and departments have produced 'toolkits' intended to help with partnership working. Examples include the online government partnership working toolkits for children's services (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk), learning cities (<http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/learningcities/index.htm>) and learning partnerships (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/learningparttoolkit/about.htm>), and downloadable government partnership working toolkits, e.g. GOSE (2003) and SEMLAC (2004). Some of these, such as the children's services toolkits – one of which is specifically designed for managers of multi-agency teams such as Sure Start – claim to draw explicitly on some of the academic partnership literature. However, analysis of these documents shows that they are much more likely to focus on the enablers than the barriers to partnership working. For example, the

webpage linking to the online toolkits for children's services at

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/multiagencyworking/>,

which is headed 'Multi-agency working', offers links to pages entitled 'benefits of multi-agency working' and 'success factors', but does not mention the disadvantages of multi-agency working or failure factors¹.

Two downloadable toolkits focusing on children's services were analysed in the light of the themes from the partnership literature discussed above, with the aim of identifying any significant differences between the academic literature and the toolkits. We have already seen that the toolkits make hardly any mention of power. The other main difference was that the toolkits focus almost exclusively on the enablers of partnership working. The SEMLAC toolkit is aimed at museum and gallery professionals working in partnership with young people and communities. It claims to provide 'the tools to succeed' in partnership working for staff at any level of involvement (2004:1). It says very little about barriers or difficulties. There is an initial acknowledgement that some difficulties were experienced in the project on which the toolkit was based, but these are put down to 'issues of timescales and reporting requirements' rather than any 'clash of institutional cultures' (ibid:4). Timescales are dealt with in some detail in the body of the toolkit (although reporting requirements are not). There are also acknowledgements that it can be difficult to create a sense of ownership throughout a partnership (ibid: 26,43–44) and that 'parity of partners' is 'often an issue' (ibid:46). Other than this, the toolkit is overwhelmingly positive about the potential benefits of partnership working, and endlessly upbeat about how these may be won. Some of the claims made seem quite far-fetched, e.g. that the continued use of an output from a short-term project, such as a DVD or a CD-ROM, constitutes sustainability of the project (ibid:6), and that 'partnership working is the ideal place [*sic*] to learn new skills' (ibid:24).

The GOSE toolkit² is aimed at all partnerships working for the benefit of children and young people, their families and carers (including Sure Start). Like the

¹ All websites last viewed on 7.2.06

² It could be argued that I have a conflict of interest here because I wrote the GOSE toolkit. However, it was written two and a half years before I analysed it for this thesis; and I am confident that the time gap has enabled me to read and analyse it as dispassionately as the other toolkits cited.

SEMLAC toolkit, it focuses on the potential benefits of partnership working. But it seems to take a more realistic view, stating upfront that partnership working can be 'demanding, frustrating and challenging' and that 'there will be barriers to overcome' (2003:7). It contains an eight-page section on 'increasing the effectiveness of partnership working', with various subheadings such as 'service planning', 'working with different age groups', and 'managing time and priorities'. Most of these begin with an explanatory paragraph including an acknowledgement that difficulties may be experienced. Examples of these acknowledgements include 'planning services in partnership can be a challenging process' (ibid:10), 'different partnerships and organisations use different age bands, and the cut-off points can seem artificial to families and professionals' (ibid:13) and 'sometimes it is difficult to juggle the competing priorities of partnership working and service development, delivery and management' (ibid:16). Nevertheless, some of the claims made seem utopian, such as that 'ultimately, partnership working will enable people delivering services to offer creative, tailor-made solutions, at the earliest possible stage, to the unique and individual problems faced by children, young people and their families' (ibid:7).

In general, academic writers seem to take a more balanced approach to the barriers and enablers than the writers of toolkits, focusing on both. In particular, the multi-faceted approaches of Newman (2001) and Ling (2002) to the tensions in partnerships seem to reflect the complexity of partnership working more fully than the dualistic barriers-and-enablers views found elsewhere in the academic literature, which in turn are more balanced than the one-sided optimistic views put forward in the toolkits and other policy literature.

Managing Partnerships

Experience of working with Sure Start partnerships suggests that while Sure Start managers receive far more exposure to the policy literature than to the academic literature, Sure Start partnerships are much more complex and multi-faceted than the policy literature would indicate. So how can a complex, tension-filled partnership be managed in accordance with official literature that appears to minimise the complexity and tensions of that partnership?

Huxham and Vangen take a detailed look at a number of the tensions that may be found in partnerships, and at how they may be managed. They suggest that there are many ways to approach any aspect of partnership management, and that 'managerial judgement', based on context and knowledge, is the key to working out which action to take to manage a given situation (2005:233–234). Other sources support this view. For example, Bardach suggests that the 'collaborative ethos' values discretion more highly than obedience (1998:232). Forester suggests that public service professionals need to use discretion and judgement (1999:10). For Hoggett, the judgement and discretion of actors in the complex, ambiguous and uncertain public sector partnership environment form the very foundations of the system itself (2005:174).

So Sure Start partnership managers have been working in an environment that is extremely complex and uncertain (NESS 2005:7). They are not unique in this. The organisational public service managers studied by Clarke and Newman were also working in complex, uncertain environments. But whereas the management style of organisations and organisational managers, as described by Clarke and Newman (1997:30), was characterised by a commitment to efficiency, Sure Start partnerships and their managers are characterised by a commitment to effectiveness (Ball 2002:18, NESS 2005:23), described by Froggett as 'the culture of effectiveness' (2002:172).

The role of Sure Start manager, therefore, has to be performed in a complex and rapidly changing external partnership working landscape, and within a dynamic internal partnership balance of power. Drawing on the input of participants, Sure Start's own evaluations have demonstrated that for this performance to be effective, exceptional flexibility and the ability to manage tensions and dilemmas are needed (Ball 2002:47–48, NESS 2005:7). Individuals who display these qualities have been called 'networkers', 'reticulists' and 'boundary-spanners' (e.g. Hudson and Hardy 2002:57, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:100, Williams 2002:103). They can use their influence to navigate skilfully through changing power dynamics; inspire trust; communicate effectively; recognise and mediate between multiple viewpoints and identities to reduce or resolve agenda and value conflicts;

and balance the complex tensions and dilemmas that exist within and around partnerships for maximum benefit. Although they may ‘care too much’, as Hoggett puts it (2005:185), they cannot afford to be altruistic, and need to use their discretion and judgement in a ‘hard-nosed’ way (Williams 2002:117). For Huxham and Vangen, partnership managers need to use their judgement and discretion about when to be facilitative and when to be directive (2005:228). To frame it in their terms, sometimes there is a need to use ‘power-over’ – albeit with sensitivity – as well as ‘power-to’ and ‘power-for’.

Unusually in the academic partnership literature, Huxham and Vangen make links between power and emotion. They point out that ‘the use of the term *power*... has emotive connotations’ (2005:174; original italics). They mention ‘feelings of mistrust’, ‘concerns’, ‘defensiveness and aggression’, and ‘frustration’ as emotions linked with feeling ‘disempowered’ (2005:173–4). So how does it feel to work as a boundary-spanning, power-wielding Sure Start manager? That question has only just begun to be addressed in the academic literature. Smith and Bryan drew on process data from an evaluation of an inner-city Sure Start partnership to look at the emotional aspects of partnership working. They found that Sure Start managers ‘needed all of their very considerable emotional reserves’ to manage their partnerships effectively (2005:205). They confirm that there is a significant emotional component to the work of managing a Sure Start partnership. But they do not say what that emotional component consists of, or how it feels to be a Sure Start manager. These are issues this thesis aims to address.

Conclusion

This chapter began by defining partnership working, and argued that in terms of the definition used Sure Start is clearly a partnership rather than a pseudo-organisation. Then the main themes from the academic partnership literature – power, trust, complexity, communication and identity – were discussed. These themes informed the development of the second coding frame used for data interpretation (chapter 4). Although each theme was considered separately in the present chapter, it became evident that they are in fact all inter-related and

overlapping. This is clearly demonstrated by the thematic interpretation of the data in chapter 5.

The barriers to and enablers of partnership working were also prominent in the literature, and discussed as part of the context-setting process. This chapter compared the academic and policy literatures on partnership working, and demonstrated that policy literature gives an overwhelmingly optimistic view of partnership while the academic literature offers a more balanced analysis.

Partnerships appear to be complex and filled with tension, and the question of how such partnerships can be managed in accordance with the requirements of optimistic policy literature was addressed. The academic literature suggests that this can be done by people who take a flexible approach, rely on their own discretion and judgement, and use power-over when necessary as well as power-to and power-for. The next question posed was how it feels to perform such a role. Before beginning to address that question, and to give another dimension to the context, the relevant literature on emotion will be reviewed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three – Emotion

Introduction

Emotion has been studied extensively: for thousands of years by philosophers, and more recently by literary theorists, psychologists, social theorists, anthropologists, physiologists, neuroscientists, sociologists, linguists, feminist theorists, historians, psychiatrists and even psychoneuroimmunologists (Lupton 1998:5,100, Shields 2002:5). There is, therefore, a colossal body of literature (Lyons 1992:295, Reddy 2001:ix), so a process of selection was required. Most reading was taken from the social science disciplines of psychology, sociology and anthropology, on the basis that psychosocial theories of emotion would be most relevant to this social science thesis. The work of scholars who studied emotion across disciplines also seemed potentially useful for a study of emotion in boundary-crossing partnership managers, and three in particular were found to offer helpful insights. They are UK sociologist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist Ian Craib, Italian cultural sociologist and clinical psychologist Alberto Melucci, and American historian and anthropologist William Reddy. This literature was approached in the hope of finding a useful theory of emotion and a working definition of emotion to use in assessing the data, and some suggestions for ways of studying emotion – within and between academic disciplines, and in organisations and partnerships – to use as a guide in constructing that data.

This chapter will begin by reviewing some theories of emotion and some existing studies of emotion in the workplace. During this process, three related themes from the emotion literature will be identified that seem potentially relevant to emotional experience in partnership working: performance, tension, and conflicting agendas. The literature will then be searched for a unified theory of emotion and for any useful definitions. The difficult relationship between language and emotion will be discussed, and some implications of attempting to study emotion through the medium of language will be considered.

Theories of Emotion

Since the end of the nineteenth century, psychological theories of emotion have focused primarily on the ways in which individuals are deemed to respond to a change in their situation, known as a 'stimulus', with feeling, thought and behaviour. One early theory, known as the 'motor feedback theory', holds that a stimulus creates physical changes first, e.g. increased heart rate or sweating, which lead to an emotional response that is then interpreted by the brain (James 1890/1950:449). Another, the 'affective primacy theory', suggests that a stimulus provokes an emotion first, which we then interpret before developing behaviour in response. This theory was first put forward by Wundt in 1907, and developed by Zajonc on the basis that we can, for example, feel afraid of something without knowing exactly what it is (Zajonc 1980:154). A third, the more recent 'commonsense theory', states that a stimulus leads to cognitive interpretation, which is followed by a subjective emotional response, and then behaviour develops (Ellsworth 1991:155).

The commonsense theory has led to a number of appraisal theories, where an 'appraisal' is a form of cognitive processing or evaluation that may lead to a change in emotion. People's emotional responses are judged to be different because they appraise situations differently. So, for example, someone who thinks that she makes mistakes because she is incompetent may respond to making another mistake by feeling miserable, while someone who thinks that making mistakes is an opportunity to learn something new may respond to making another mistake by feeling excited. Appraisal theories aim to specify the differences in interpretation that create the different emotional responses (Ellsworth 1991:149).

Buck is an appraisal theorist who drew on emotion theories and communication theory to formulate his 'developmental-interactionist' theory, which encompassed motivation as well as cognition and emotion. His theory 'views emotion as contributing structured input into the attribution/appraisal process, so that emotion is really a type of knowledge: a type of "cognition"' (1991:101). Buck separates cognition into 'knowledge-by-acquaintance' and 'knowledge-by-description',

defining knowledge-by-acquaintance as 'direct sensory awareness' and knowledge-by-description as 'knowledge about such sense data' (ibid:108). This prompts a definition of appraisal:

At some point, knowledge-by-acquaintance must be transformed into knowledge-by-description. Raw sensory and emotional information must become transformed into knowledge *about* this information. Developmental-interactionist theory suggests that it is this process that can most usefully be termed "appraisal" (ibid:110; original italics).

Buck discusses his theory with reference to perception (ibid:114), embodiment (ibid:115), spontaneous and symbolic communication (ibid:128), language and reasoning (ibid:131), emotional competence (ibid:132) and emotional education (ibid:134).

Buck's approach seems to be more holistic than the sequential theories of the earlier psychologists. Goleman goes further still, drawing on the affective primacy theory, the commonsense theory, and some appraisal theories. He speaks of 'the emotional mind' and 'the rational mind' (1996:291). For Goleman, the key characteristic of the emotional mind is its response speed, sometimes reacting to a stimulus almost instantaneously; the rational mind takes a moment or two longer to respond, and can then form an appraisal leading to a second type of emotional response (ibid:293). For example, the unexpected appearance of a face at a window can create instant fear, followed by an appraisal in which the face is recognised as a friend's, which leads to a feeling of pleasure at the sight.

Goleman shared Buck's interest in emotional competence and emotional education. He popularised the term 'emotional intelligence', which he defines as 'a key set of ... abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope' (Goleman 1996:34). This was also recognised as a useful concept for the study of people in organisations. For example, Cooper, writing of emotional intelligence in leadership roles, defines it as 'the ability to sense, understand, and effectively

apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, connection and influence' (1997:xiii). And Goleman, writing later of emotional intelligence in the workplace, redefines it as 'the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships' (Goleman 2000:317).

The theory of emotional intelligence seemed interesting and potentially useful in the context of this thesis, particularly given its links with the workplace. However, like the other psychological theories discussed above, Goleman's theory was still focused on emotion as experienced and managed by individuals in isolation, rather than emotion as experienced and managed by people in workplace settings. Psychologists tend to view emotion as generated entirely from within, but for sociologists, context contributes as much to people's emotional responses as do their internal physical systems (Kemper 1991:302).

Performance

Although sociologists acknowledge the importance of context in studying human interaction, they do not find it easy to identify the relationships between internal feelings and external contexts (e.g. Froggett 2002:20). Some sociologists have used performance as a theoretical analogy in an attempt to overcome this difficulty. For example, Freund draws on psychological theories of emotion to form his view that emotions 'help us "process" sensory information quickly and thus are very important "tools" in helping us engage with or detach ourselves from social and physical environments' (Freund 1999:278). He uses spatial and theatrical metaphors to 'conceptualise the maintenance of individual and/or group identity and informational preserves as involving the building and maintenance of boundaries and the regulation of informational flow across such boundaries – in a sense, a geography of emotions and emotional relationships' (ibid:268). Boundaries are a key concept in Freund's analysis, including physical boundaries, such as that between the body and the environment (ibid:270), and emotional boundaries in relationships between people (ibid:271). He sees emotion as both 'embodied' and 'embedded in the field ... of social relations' (ibid:272), and asserts

that 'the strength or permeability of self–other or self–environmental boundaries is a function of our feelings' (ibid:278).

The main concept in Freund's theory is that of dramaturgical stress. He asserts that we live in a 'dramaturgical society' where 'the manipulation of appearances is an important skill and a highly complex and self-conscious act', 'emotions and bodily expressions' are 'very much controlled', and the 'activity of manipulating appearances is... stressful' (ibid:280). Freund acknowledges that 'since performing is a part of social life in all societies, some dramaturgical stress is present everywhere' (ibid). Drawing on the work of Cockerham (1978) and Hochschild (1983), he suggests that dramaturgical stress is increased when there is variance between the self as presented externally and the self as felt internally:

... under those conditions, in which one's ontological security is threatened, the response to a breach of boundaries, the stress of keeping informational spheres apart and performances credible, and of managing and maintaining the flow of information in psychological, social-physical space, becomes highly stressful (ibid:281).

Like Freund, Shields is interested in emotional performance, and she sets it even more firmly in the social context. She points out the negative and positive social views of emotion, i.e. that describing someone as 'emotional' is not usually a compliment, although saying that someone 'speaks from the heart' implies that they are more credible than someone who does not (2002:2). She highlights the paradoxes prevalent in these views: 'too much emotion can be destructive; too little emotion can be damaging. Emotion must be controlled, but bottling up emotion just makes things worse' (ibid:11).

Shields sees emotional performance in terms of standards, either explicit and clear or implicit and opaque. She describes the way in which folk theories of emotion (Oatley and Duncan 1992:250), or what everyone 'knows' to be true, are apparently explicit and clear but in fact can make it difficult to examine assumptions by preventing people from formulating questions they might otherwise ask. She uses norms around children's emotional development to

illustrate this: 'Everyone agrees that the "right amount" of the "right emotion" is good and essential to the child's healthy development. At the same time, everyone agrees that too much or not enough emotion, or the wrong kind of emotion is very bad indeed' (2002:91). She supports her point with an example from a 'mid-twentieth-century parent advice manual' (English and Finch 1951) which states that 'our goal for our children is ... to help them learn to use their emotions constructively. We want them to be free of damaging emotional conflicts, of unreasonable fears and anxieties. But we want them, too, to be able to express anger at social abuses and injustices ...'

This all sounds very good until we start to ask exactly how a parent is supposed to tell the difference between damaging, healthy, or neutral conflicts in advance. How can a parent recognize the child's "unreasonable fears" with confidence: should a bully be ignored, approached, reported to authorities? What exactly defines the appropriate expression of anger? When is anger justifiable and when is it a nasty, self-centered tantrum – and who decides? The answer, of course, is "it depends". It depends, not on the emotion *per se*, but on context. (Shields 2002:91–92)

Lupton views emotion differently, although here context is also central to the analysis. She uses discourse theory and psychoanalytic theory as twin lenses through which to view emotion: discourse theory focuses on the external, spoken, social demonstration of emotion; psychoanalytic theory focuses on its internal manifestation. She is particularly interested in emotional discourses, which she describes as social products that constantly change their positions in relation to each other through time. For Lupton, this offers people a choice of ways to understand and interpret emotions, so that – up to a point – they can select or resist a discourse that is dominant at any given time (1998:27). She views this choice as one that can be made consciously or unconsciously. Lupton appreciates the pluralist view of people and the acceptance of ambiguity that psychoanalytic theory offers (ibid:31).

Like Shields, Lupton highlights the paradoxes in social views of emotion, seeing them in terms of Cartesian dualism: 'the ways in which we feel, think about, talk about and experience emotions position them in both highly negative and highly

positive ways that echo the binary oppositions constructed between culture and nature and mind and body' (ibid:167). She links this with her theoretical stance:

... our discourses on the emotions constantly slip between positioning them as self and as other, as things with which we are born, which are inevitably part of us, but also as things that require conscious control lest they overwhelm or betray us ... (ibid:168).

Lupton's use of psychoanalytic theory also enables her to highlight the possibility that attempts to achieve such 'conscious control' may not always be successful (ibid:169).

Tension

Performance seems to focus primarily on what is shown, demonstrated, visible. Yet it appears from the literature reviewed so far that stress and anxiety are also caused by what is being hidden and the emotional tension that results.

Sociologists who study emotion in the workplace pay attention to what is hidden. One such is Hochschild, whose research focused initially on front-line workers in the private sector, particularly flight attendants. She conceptualised 'emotional labour' as the management of emotion within a work environment shaped by the aim for profit 'to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (1983:7). She saw this as consisting of two components: emotional labour itself, i.e. controlling one's own emotions, and 'emotional management', which for her meant controlling the emotions of others (ibid). These components are linked, because emotional labour 'requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others' (ibid).

Hochschild's concept of emotional labour differs from the concept of emotional performance used by Freund and Shields. In emotional performance, actors are constrained by unwritten social rules, and make choices within those about what to display and what to hide. This also applies in the workplace, but there is an extra layer of constraint, imposed by organisational sanctions giving actors fewer

choices about what to display and what to hide. For example, in many social situations in Western society it would be acceptable for someone to express feelings of sadness or frustration. There is no situation in which this would be acceptable for a flight attendant while engaged in his or her profession, however sad or frustrated he or she may feel.

Ten years after defining emotional labour, Hochschild focused on managers. She argued that they need to know about, assess and regulate their own emotions and feelings, and those of other people from a range of 'statuses, reputations and backgrounds' (1993:x-xi). Like Freund, she sees boundaries in the emotional landscape:

"Company culture" sets the social boundaries between the right and wrong thing to do. Managers infer the corresponding emotional boundaries between the right and wrong way to feel in a range of contexts – both those of others and of themselves' (ibid:xi).

She concludes that 'real-time emotions are a large part of what managers manage' (ibid:xii).

Putnam and Mumby view emotion in the workplace as a 'commodity for achieving instrumental goals' (1993:37). They support Freund's concept of dramaturgical stress, saying that 'emotional labour is experienced most strongly when employees are asked to express emotions that contradict their inner feelings' (ibid:38), and note that the amount of stress felt by employees differs between individuals and organisations (ibid:39). They note that in some social situations people may choose to exert emotional control, such as by expressing a different emotion from the one they are feeling in order to achieve a desired end, e.g. to avoid upsetting someone, and that this in itself may be stressful. However, their view is that when such emotional control becomes a requirement of a job, to help fulfil commercial or strategic aims, the stress may be much greater (ibid:50). They assert that such stress is frequently accompanied by the potentially avoidable characteristics of 'emotional numbness and burnout' (ibid:44).

Conflicting Agendas

Like Hochschild, Putnam and Mumby focus on what is hidden as well as what is shown. Hochschild and Putnam and Mumby also hint at the potential for conflicting agendas. This comes out more strongly in the work of Gabriel, who introduces the postmodern concept of a 'flexible organisation', i.e. one 'which does away with rigid hierarchies, procedures, products and boundaries, in favour of constant and continuous reinvention, redefinition and mobility' (Gabriel 2003:171). He cites Clegg (1990) to note that in a flexible organisation, jobs are integrated, overlapping and multi-skilled (ibid). Gabriel argues that, while traditional organisations relied on exercising control through bureaucratic rules and procedures, flexible organisations 'use cultural and emotional controls (emphasizing the importance of customer service, quality and image; affirming the business enterprise as an arena for heroic or spiritual accomplishments, etc), structural controls (continuous measurements and benchmarking, flatter organizational hierarchies, etc), technological [*sic*] (electronic surveillance of unimaginable sophistication), spatial controls (open-plan offices, controlled accesses) and so forth' (ibid:175). For Gabriel, this has wide-ranging emotional and political effects, creating 'even more possibilities of voice, with employees displaying a bewildering range of responses ...' (ibid). They may comply with, supplant or contest management discourses, so that 'within formal organizations, there are spaces which are hard to manage and control, spaces that are *unmanaged* and *unmanageable*; in these spaces, individuals can fashion identities which may amount neither to conformity nor to rebellion, but are infinitely more complex and rich than those deriving from official organizational practices' (ibid:176; original emphasis). This offers a much fuller and more multifaceted picture of emotional labour and its context than is provided by the image of the worker being required to express one emotion while feeling another. In Gabriel's flexible organisation, conflicting agendas abound, and people trying to manage these agendas are like the chameleon in a kaleidoscope described at the start of this thesis.

Emotion in the Wider Context

Like emotional intelligence, this theorising of emotions in the workplace seems both interesting and potentially useful. However, it tends to focus more on the social aspects of the context than on its structural or political aspects (Fineman 1993:218–19). And, as the partnership literature demonstrates (chapter 2), the structural and political contexts for people working in partnership are as complex and multi-faceted as the social and personal contexts.

Anthropological researchers see social, structural and political contexts as central in determining meaning. Many anthropologists take the Foucauldian approach of seeing power as rooted in discourse, and politics as rooted in everyday social interactions. For example, in the preface to their collection of anthropological studies of emotion, Lutz and Abu-Lughod say

... the authors in this volume have explored the interplay of emotion talk and the politics of everyday social life. The contributors share a sense of the beauty and intricacies of conversation, as well as its involvement in power – whether the power to move others or the power that shapes discursive forms and the social relations in which they participate. They show the many ways discourse becomes emotional and emotion becomes discourse, and they treat narratives, conversation, performances, poetry, and song not as texts for cultural analysis but as social practices with serious effects. (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990:vii)

Discourse for them, although impossible to define precisely, refers to the use of language in context, including both informal conversation and more formal artistic forms such as stories and poems (ibid:7–8). As well as seeing power as rooted in discourse, Lutz and Abu-Lughod also argue that power produces discourse, and that discourse should ‘be understood in relation not just to social life but to power’ (ibid:10). They take this a step further, stating their view that ‘emotion discourses establish, assert, challenge, or reinforce power or status differences’ (ibid:14). This is an echo of Lutz: ‘The concept of emotion ... exists in a system of power relations and plays a role in maintaining it’. (Lutz 1988:54)

Irvine, in her account of studying emotion discourses in a rural Wolof community in Senegal, asserts that the communication of emotion does not simply exist within a social, structural and political context, but is itself structured by the context in which it occurs (Irvine 1990:128). For her, understanding someone's social situations and relationships is critical for understanding their emotions (ibid:130). Unlike Goleman, Irvine does not seem to perceive emotion as having separate subjective and objective components: '... one cannot experience a situation only in itself, without also being influenced by feelings about the social voices talking in it and about it, and by feelings about the roads not taken ...'. (ibid:156) Lutz asserts that not only concrete situations but abstract concepts such as theory have an emotional dimension: '... all theories (of emotion or other phenomena) are emotional in the sense that their construction is driven by interests, values, and commitments ...'. (Lutz 1988:219) Alvesson and Sköldberg point out that 'if one has worked a lot on a particular theory, one becomes, as a rule, emotionally attached to it' (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:250). It seems reasonable to speculate that people begin working on a particular theory because it appeals to them, at least in part, on an emotional level (and, therefore, that the theories used in this thesis have some emotional appeal for me).

In Search of a Unified Theory of Emotion

Despite all the theorising of emotion that has taken place within each discipline, the literature reviewed so far did not reveal a unifying theory of emotion, either within or between any of the disciplines, which could underpin this thesis. In fact there is a 'proliferation of competing theories' (Shields 2002:6). These can be grouped into categories – reductionist, constructionist, post-structural, post-modern, feminist and so on – but that does not help much either.

So had any of the cross-boundary scholars formulated an interdisciplinary theory? For Craib, working as both a sociologist and a psychotherapist has highlighted the enormous difficulty in studying emotion. He points out that as a sociologist 'it is possible to study the social rules around emotional experience and emotional expression with little or no knowledge of the emotional life of the people who have to work within these rules – and then to mistake the social scaffolding of emotions

for emotional life itself' (Craib 1998:111). Also, in reference to his three-year training as a psychotherapist, he says 'one of the few things we end up certain of is the extraordinary difficulty in distinguishing between one's own emotions and those of others and how readily people tell you what you want to hear' (ibid:115). He asserts the importance, in this light, of sociologists who study emotion being 'aware of the depth of what they are studying and the comparatively abstract level at which they are studying it' (ibid).

For Craib, sociologists who study emotion at this 'comparatively abstract level' cannot simply focus on context, using their intellects alone. He says that when sociologists study emotion they should demonstrate that they know what they are talking about 'and experience, the subjective, the inner world, is a vital part of this discussion' (1998:9). He defines experience as 'a wide range of affect which has both physical and ideational components, both of which may be conscious or unconscious or some combination of both' (ibid:10).

Craib sees emotions as constructed both by and within (presumably Western) society and individuals as part of a process of external and internal negotiation of social and individual identity (1998:4). He notes how the identities that individuals fashion in their work environment can themselves become products 'to be revamped and relaunched at regular intervals' (ibid:3). Melucci, a cultural sociologist and clinical psychologist, also focuses on identity, which he sees as a process 'involving constant negotiation among different parts of the self, among different times of the self, and among the different settings or systems to which each of us belongs' (Melucci 1996:49). He shares Freud's view of the importance of emotional boundaries, identifying 'a permanent tension between the process of the continuous redefinition of oneself and the need to stabilize one's boundaries' (ibid:51). He suggests that in response 'conceptually, it is important to shift from a consideration of identity in terms of either/or to a nonlinear perspective which includes the possibility of and/and' (ibid). For Melucci, this 'opens a new field for identity entrepreneurs, social actors creating and selling the capacity for manoeuvring with identities; producing new opportunities for recognition, importing languages and codes from one field to another' (ibid:53).

Like Craib, Melucci states that using the intellect alone is inadequate to study emotion. He says 'the dimensions of intuition, feeling, and an immediate and global relationship with reality are equally important constituents' (Melucci 1996:62), and asks how we can study emotions (or memory, or behaviour) 'through the activity of the mind which at the same time is the very object of its own analytical operations?' (ibid:63).

Reddy is a historian and anthropologist who conceptualises the type of cognitive processing discussed by appraisal theorists as a form of translation. For Reddy,

'... the concept of translation allows one to speak of the relation between language and the world in a way that is neither Cartesian (distinguishing sharply between subjective and objective conditions, as most psychologists continue to do) nor poststructuralist. It allows one to say, meaningfully, that there are kinds of thought that lie "outside" of language, yet are intimately involved in the formulation of utterances. Emotions ... are among the most important of such kinds of thought; and, when we speak of our emotions, they come into a peculiar, dynamic relationship with what we say about them ...' (Reddy 2001:64)

This is reminiscent of Goleman's concept of 'emotional mind' and 'rational mind'. Reddy proposes that translation be used to replace the poststructuralist, Saussurean concept of 'sign' (ibid:78). Like Melucci, he takes a non-linear perspective, suggesting that

'... translation is something that goes on, not just between languages and between individuals, but among sensory modalities, procedural habits, and linguistic structures. This idea points, not toward a reconstitution of a Cartesian type of subjectivity, but toward a conception of the individual as a site where messages arrive in many different languages or codes, and where some of the messages are successfully translated into other codes, while others are not ...' (Reddy 2001:80)

Reddy takes a slightly different approach from Craib's and Melucci's concepts of negotiated identities in his idea of the 'disaggregated self':

Because the translation tasks are always incomplete, and the translations always indeterminate, the kind of self that is possible, by this approach, is a “disaggregated” self. It is disaggregated because memory traces, perception skills, goal hierarchies lie about in various stages of activation, with various patterns of mutual coordination established by habit, and with innumerable latent conflicts and contradictions capable of coming to the fore depending on the context ... the disaggregated self has no inherent unity. However, its disunity derives directly from the fact that it has constantly before it flows of signifiers in many different codes or languages, both verbal and nonverbal, in constant need of translation’ (Reddy 2001:95).

Reddy notes the complexity of the links between feeling and language, which for him is because speaking about emotion affects that emotion in a circular relationship. He uses the phrase ‘thought material’ to denote ‘the vastness and diversity of the stuff translation must work on’ (2001:87):

An attempt to characterize an emotion in a brief phrase or two ... inevitably has *effects on the activated thought material* and may have the effect of activating or altering still other thought material within the vast terrain of currently inactive sensory input and procedural and declarative memory. Therefore, even if it were in principle possible to sum up the overall character of activated thought material in a few words, the attempt to do so is already initiating changes in this material before it is fully formulated. The translation into an emotional code carried out by attention as it formulates and utters an emotional statement can be very far reaching in its consequences for the multivocal thought patterns that are excited or dampened down as attention works ...’. (Reddy 2001:102, original italics)

For Reddy, this is ‘the most important facet of emotional expression’ (2001:104). He regards emotional statements, which he terms ‘emotives’, as ‘neither true nor false; as descriptions they always fail, because of the complexity of the personal states they describe in the first instance, and because of the effects they have on these states as they are formulated and uttered’ (ibid:108).

Reddy broadens the concept of emotional management, suggesting the use of ‘the idea of “navigation” to refer to the whole tenor of emotional life’ (ibid:109). He uses the term ‘navigation’ to ‘refer to a broad array of emotional changes,

including high-level goal shifts. “Navigation” thus encompasses “management,” which is the use of emotives’ self-altering effects, in the name of a fixed set of goals.’ (ibid:122)

The work of the cross-boundary scholars offers a range of helpful concepts. First, that emotion is enormously difficult to study, and impossible using the intellect alone; the student of emotion must use their own emotional experience to inform the study. Second, that emotion is individually and socially constructed through internal and external negotiation of complex and mutable identities. Third, that because of this complexity and mutability, emotion can never be fully described or understood. However, once again there was no overarching theory of emotion that could be adopted or adapted for use in this thesis.

In Search of a Definition

So was there a useful definition of emotion in the literature? Attempts to formulate precise definitions of emotion, and to express clear distinctions between emotion, feeling, mood, sensation, affect, passion, sentiment and other such words, have occupied many students of the subject (Lupton 1998:5). Plutchik reports the work of Kleinginna and Kleinginna, who in their 1981 review found 92 definitions of emotion alone in ‘textbooks, dictionaries and other sources’ (Plutchik 1994:5). They proposed the following ‘integrated definition’ (ibid):

Emotion is a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated by neural/hormonal systems, which can (a) give rise to affective experiences such as feelings of arousal, pleasure/ displeasure; (b) generate cognitive processes such as emotionally relevant perceptual effects, appraisals, labeling processes; (c) activate widespread physiological adjustments to the arousing conditions; and (d) lead to behavior that is often, but not always, expressive, goal-directed, and adaptive. (ibid)

Plutchik considers this to be ‘useful because it includes many of the diverse ideas found in the literature about emotions’, yet he cautions that it should be seen as merely ‘a first approximation to this complex category’ (ibid). It is clearly trying to be comprehensive, but seems too unwieldy to be useful.

Berkowitz focuses on feeling rather than emotion. He defines this as 'synonymous with conscious affect ... a broad meaning that includes emotional experiences, moods, and even physical sensations' (Berkowitz 2000:2). Plutchik suggests that we separate emotion from feeling, because emotion is 'a complex theoretical term whose characteristics can only be inferred on the basis of a congruence of various classes of evidence' while feeling is 'an inner emotional state' (Plutchik 1994:16).

Gabriel regards any attempt to define emotion as 'likely to be misguided', and asserts that 'what is of most interest is how the concept of 'emotion' is used or invoked rather than the search for definitions, either in general or in particular' (Gabriel 1993:146). This, combined with the divide between feeling and emotion outlined above, seemed more helpful than any of the definitions of emotions found in the literature. So in the rest of this thesis, 'feeling' will be used to denote a person's internal emotional experience, and 'emotion' to denote that experience translated into language in a specific context.

Language and Emotion

Language has a key role in articulating emotion (Kemper 1991:336; Gabriel 1993:149; Lupton 1998:25) but the translation of feeling into language is undoubtedly a tricky process. For a start, language itself is inherently ambiguous, which makes it difficult to produce firm definitions of emotion issues – which are themselves often complex and mutable (Plutchik 1994:16). Shields sees language as a complicating factor in the relationship between emotion and cognition. She points out that we do not need language for our innate emotional abilities to function, but that using language to consider and discuss the emotions of ourselves and others 'introduces a new and complex set of questions about emotion functioning that is unique to human experience' (Shields 2002:8–9). This is related to the question raised by Melucci (above) about how we can use our minds to study our own emotions when they are so inextricably linked. It is also related to Reddy's point (above) regarding the way in which speaking of emotional subjects affects our feelings about them (see also Lupton 1998:26).

Irvine introduces the linguistic concept of 'register' and, in particular, 'affective register' (Irvine 1990:127,128). She defines register as 'a coherent complex of linguistic features linked to a situation of use' (ibid:127) and affective register as 'a set of different representations of emotion – a set that may be culturally defined and linked to cultural conceptions of the diversity of persons, personalities, and situations' (ibid:128). Melucci takes a similar view, that it is 'the power of naming which allows us to fabricate the world' and that 'we must therefore learn to move between ... the different languages which we use to nominate our world – flexibly, willing to accept change, and respectful of the limit' (Melucci 1996:131–132).

For Irvine, 'the communication of feeling is not merely a property of the individual, or a function of transient irrational impulses, or an unruly force operating outside the realm of linguistic form. Instead, it is socially, culturally, and linguistically structured, and we cannot adequately interpret individuals' behavior as emotional expression until we understand some of that framework' (Irvine 1990:128). It is crucial that context is taken into account when assessing the meaning of emotions, because the same report of an emotion may well have different reference points, and therefore overall different meanings, in different contexts (ibid:130; Plutchik 1994:16).

Melucci also notes the difficulty in matching 'the meaning of our behaviour with the words we use to name and recognize what we do' (Melucci 1996:1) and identifies a 'great divide between experiencing and naming' (ibid:9). Like Reddy, Lutz uses the concept of translation to discuss ways of managing such complex meanings:

What must be translated are the meanings of the emotion words spoken in everyday conversation, of the emotionally imbued events of everyday life, of tears and other gestures, and of audience reaction to emotional performance. The interpretive task, then, is not primarily to fathom somehow "what they are feeling" inside (Geertz 1976) but rather to translate emotional communications from one idiom, context, language, or sociohistorical mode of understanding into another ... (Lutz 1998:8).

Oatley and Duncan assert that people's own understandings of emotional incidents, and the language people use to describe the incidents they have

experienced, are paramount in understanding emotion, both academically and personally (Oatley and Duncan 1992:289). However, as everyone's personal context is different, the language used by one person may mean something different to another; then surely, even when a group is gathered at the same time and place within the same social and political context, the communication of emotion between people always includes at least an element of translation.

And language meaning different things to different people is not the only problem when trying to communicate about emotion. Fineman focuses on the difficulty in communicating findings as well as interpreting data: 'emotions ... soon exhaust the descriptive/evocative capacity of written language' (Fineman 1993:221). Craib also grapples with this difficulty, saying 'perhaps there is something imponderable about experience which takes us towards poetics and the limits of my expertise' (Craib 1998:2). Reddy states that 'there is no way, in language, to convey the richness of even the simplest ... reactions to routine situations. This failure of language is similar to language's inability to capture all the meanings of a dance (or dance's, to capture those of a text)' (Reddy 2001:90).

If it is impossible to use language to research and communicate about emotion, should this research be abandoned before it has begun? Luckily, the scholars who have studied emotion in organisations are more sanguine on this point. The number of books and articles on the subject demonstrate that it is possible to produce language-based communication about studies of emotion. However, there is very little in the literature about emotion in partnerships. This is a gap that this thesis aims to address. But if emotion has not been clearly defined or definitively theorised (e.g. Griffiths 1998:202), and is almost impossible to communicate linguistically, how, then, can it be studied within a complex partnership environment?

On the surface, 'partnership' seems like a more egalitarian concept than the hierarchical 'organisation', but power imbalances are every bit as inevitable within partnerships as within organisations (Froggett 2002:21). The language currently used in the public sector has a very limited emotional vocabulary, which makes it particularly hard to elicit information from people working in partnership about their

experience of emotional labour (ibid 10, 21). This was going to make the research even more difficult. A Gadamerian interpretative approach to perceived meaning might help, but, as shown in the Introduction, Gadamer was adamant that his approach was not a social science method. Could there be methods of data collection, data analysis and writing that would enable some understanding and communication about the slippery, wriggly subject of emotion?

Conclusion

This chapter began by reviewing some theories of emotion and some existing studies of emotion in organisations. Three related themes from the literature were highlighted – performance, tension, and conflicting agendas – because they seemed potentially relevant to emotional experience in partnership working. People can experience emotional tension in many settings because of unwritten social rules about what is acceptable to show and what to hide. In the workplace such tensions may take specific forms, circumscribed not only by such unwritten social rules but also by organisational restrictions such as corporate requirements and power structures. This can affect individual performance and lead to conflicting agendas.

The literature was searched for a unified theory of emotion that could be used to underpin this research, but no such theory was found. A number of definitions of emotion have been put forward in the literature, but most are unwieldy. There was a useful distinction between feeling and emotion, and these will be used to denote internal emotional experience and expressed emotion respectively.

Emotion is primarily expressed through language. However, because of its complex and mutable nature, emotion can never be fully described or understood. Therefore a process of internal and external translation and interpretation is involved in any linguistic communication about emotion. This poses many challenges for the emotion researcher. The next chapter discusses a variety of ways in which some of these challenges may be met.

Chapter Four – Methodology

Introduction

This thesis sets out to explore four research questions as mentioned in the Introduction:

1. How do Sure Start managers manage their own feelings and emotions?
2. How do Sure Start managers manage the feelings and emotions of others?
3. How do Sure Start managers navigate through the complex, ambiguous and uncertain emotional experiences of partnership working?
4. How do Sure Start managers make sense of their emotional experiences?

These research questions led to the methodological choices and decisions discussed in this chapter.

The chapter begins with an outline of my epistemological and ontological positions before turning to the research design. Based on the methodology literature (e.g. Oppenheim 1966:49; Mishler 1986:ix; Gillham 2000:1, 10–12; Hollway and Jefferson 2000:2) and some years of professional research experience, I was concerned that traditional data collection techniques such as interviews and focus groups might not elicit rich data about emotional experience in the workplace. Nevertheless, initially traditional methods were used to test this proposition. The methods used and their results are discussed. They did elicit a little data about emotion, but it was too sparse to serve as the basis for a thesis.

Therefore, a data construction method based on storytelling, called the Multi-Story Method (MSM), was devised. Because the MSM is a new method, its genesis and rationale are discussed in detail. A rigorous ethical approach was taken throughout the research process, and is illustrated in this chapter with respect to the MSM. This chapter will also explain the procedures used for data coding and interpretation, the approach taken to triangulation, and the criteria that were established for assessing the rigour of the research.

Epistemology and Ontology

The basis of the epistemological perspective for the thesis is premodern. The ancient Greeks had two separate approaches to truth, which Plato called *logos* (reason) and *mythos* (myth) (e.g. Armstrong 2003). Neither approach was held to be superior to the other; they were of equal importance and validity. *Logos* equated to today's rational scientific approach, aiming to depict the real world with accuracy. *Mythos* spoke of past events that may or may not have happened in *logos*'s terms, but in a way happened all the time, and so could not be interpreted objectively. People learned from *mythos* as much as from *logos*. And storytelling, in particular, transmitted information and knowledge, and also encouraged people towards personal health and creative solving of problems (Parkin 2001). The aim of the methodology underpinning this thesis is to use group discussion based on told stories to uncover some of the mythic aspects of how Sure Start managers feel about their work.

Logos and *mythos* can be seen as gendered concepts, because the rationality inherent in *logos* is associated with male norms, while the illogicality inherent in *mythos* is associated with female norms (Anderson 2004). Therefore the epistemological perspective for this thesis is primarily a feminist one. For this research, this means that a sharp distinction cannot be drawn between the perspective and situation of the researcher, and the knowledge constructed during the research; it is not possible to separate the knower from the known. This is explored in more detail in chapter 8 of this thesis.

Anderson (2004) distinguishes between many different types and aspects of feminist epistemology. Taking emotion as a topic, and using qualitative research methods, could be held to define this thesis as feminist research. However, following Anderson, this thesis is not presented as feminist research, but as work done by a researcher with a feminist perspective. That is, the research question stems from

feminist interests, and the methods are selected or devised to aid exploration of the research question.

There are two main feminist interests behind the research question. The first influences the topic of the research; it is a political, and therefore an ethical, interest (Gillies and Alldred 2002:33). It is based on my own experiences of working as a manager in children's services in the 1990s, and of working closely with many children's services managers as a consultant and researcher in the 2000s. I learned from my experiences that the emotions of such managers are largely disregarded in their work, and that this seems to have a deleterious effect on them as human beings, as well as on their colleagues, their friends and relations, and ultimately – and perhaps most importantly – on the families and children who use the services they manage. As described in the Introduction to this thesis, I was partly motivated by my wish to make a difference to this, and the will to make a difference is described by Gillies and Alldred as a fundamental feminist principle (2002:39,43).

The second main feminist interest behind the research question is where epistemology and ontology coincide. It influences the methods used, and is rooted in a desire to get away from the 'key modernist belief ... in which researchers are schooled ... that research knowledge is Truth ...' (Alldred and Gillies 2002:154). As shown in chapter 3, emotion cannot be observed or discussed without emotion. Also, data construction does not occur 'without the interpretive involvement of the researcher' (ibid:159; see also Erickson 2004:486). So it does not make sense to attempt to study emotion in terms of seeking research knowledge as objective 'truth'. This is the initial ontological perspective of the research, which can be described as postmodern.

The feminist interests behind the research questions inform my position on research ethics. There are many complex debates about ethical philosophy and research practice that go far beyond the scope of this thesis, but Edwards and Mauthner (2002) provide a helpful summary. They assert that 'an explicit theoretical grounding in a feminist ethics of care would enhance many feminist and other discussions of the

research process where this is concerned with ethical dilemmas' (2002:15). They also say that 'any ... value based ethical approach ... calls for attention to specificity and context' (2002:22). The approach used in this research was based on Edwards and Mauthner's ethics of care, and is described in detail later in the chapter.

Ethical considerations permeated the research process from planning to writing, and will continue to be integral throughout dissemination. The ethical approach to this research is highlighted in this chapter because it was in working with research participants that there was the highest possibility of causing direct harm to others, particularly as an untried method of data construction was being tested.

The use of a feminist ethics of care, as part of the theoretical underpinning for the methodology in this research, links with my premodern and feminist (modern) epistemological perspectives and my postmodern ontological perspective. It supports the position that it is impossible to separate the knower from the known through the emphasis it places on situated knowledge. It also supports the position that finding 'objective truth' is not the only worthwhile aim for research enquiry, by taking a robustly reflexive approach to research practice.

Initial Research Using Traditional Methods

My initial research used participant observation, semi-structured telephone interviews, and document analysis as data collection methods.

Participant observation was carried out at one meeting of five Sure Start managers and other colleagues in Shire¹, one of three Sure Start managers and other colleagues in Borders, and one of eight Sure Start managers in Conurbation. The Shire meeting lasted for two hours and the Borders and Conurbation meetings each lasted for one day. I recorded all uses of emotion labels throughout, and as much as

¹ Shire, Conurbation, City and Borders are pseudonyms for the four local authority areas in which I conducted research with Sure Start managers.

I could of the discussions in general except where particularly sensitive or confidential issues were being covered.

Twenty-five emotions were mentioned in the participant observation meetings, 19 of which were also mentioned in the MSM (appendix 2). The other six were '*a right buzz*', '*difficult*', '*heartened*', '*positive*', '*shocked*', and '*startled*'. '*A right buzz*' is similar to feeling '*fantastic*'; they were each used once, in consecutive sentences spoken by two people about the same topic. '*Heartened*' was used several times, but only by one person who was chairing one of the meetings; it seemed to be part of her natural speech pattern. '*Shocked*' and '*startled*' are similar to '*surprised*'; '*shocked*' was used once, and '*shocked and startled*' once. '*Difficult*' and '*positive*' are more interesting, as both were used several times in contexts such as '*I was feeling very positive about capital*' and '*that felt difficult to manage*'. During the MSM these words were used differently: '*difficult*' was used to talk about tasks that were not easy to do, and '*positive*' was used as an attribute or in opposition to '*negative*'. This suggests that in English public sector professional language used at meetings, the words '*difficult*' and '*positive*' may be used as umbrella terms for negative and positive emotions.

When an emotion was mentioned, it was not discussed or expressed at length. At times it seemed that people were feeling more than they were saying. At least once in each meeting a situation was described as a '*nightmare*', another term that was not used in the MSM and which seemed from the context to be another possible umbrella term for a range of emotions. And at other times it seemed that people were choosing language carefully to avoid using emotion words. For example, one person said '*I was a bit, er, er, concerned to hear someone from another authority say they wouldn't roll out services without extra funding*'. Her hesitation before choosing the word '*concerned*', and the heavy emphasis she placed on the word as she spoke combined with her body language (grimacing, shaking head and waving one hand in a circular motion), indicate that she was experiencing a stronger emotion than concern, or another emotion or emotions as well as concern.

Semi-structured telephone interviews were undertaken with eight Sure Start managers in Conurbation, including the questions 'What are the main issues that you personally are facing at present as a Sure Start manager?' and 'How does this make you feel?' These elicited 14 emotions, nine of which were also mentioned in the MSM (appendix 2). The other five were '*jealousy*', mentioned by two people, and feeling '*marginalized*', '*stretched*', '*undervalued*' and '*vulnerable*', mentioned by one person each. The words '*difficult*' and '*positive*' were used in a similar way in the telephone interviews as they were in the MSM, and the word '*nightmare*' was used in a similar way as it was in the participant observation.

Document analysis of guidance issued by the Sure Start Unit that was available on the Internet between mid-2003 and mid-2004, and of articles referring to Sure Start managers that appeared in *Community Care* and *Guardian Society* between mid-2003 and mid-2004, was carried out using the second coding frame (full details of all three coding frames used for data interpretation are given later in this chapter). The analysis of these official documents and press articles yielded no data about emotion experienced by Sure Start managers.

Research Design

In order to explore the research questions fully, the main method selected needed to enable participants to explain some of their experiences of emotion in the context of their employment as managers of Sure Start partnerships. In accordance with the ontological perspective, the method did not need to reveal 'truth' about this emotional experience (that being an irrelevant concept) but to show some aspects of its meaning.

A personal interest in storytelling led me to the literature on the use of narrative and story in research. The majority of the literature on narrative analysis treats narrative as a story that the narrator represents from their experience as 'true', e.g. Knapp and Miller's definition of narratives as 'the stories people tell about their lives' (1994:31); a story that is, or could be, part of a naturalistic discourse as easily as it is part of a

research encounter (Gabriel 1998:139). This is the definition of narrative that will be used in this thesis. However, the search for 'truth' in the accounts of research participants is – in Plato's terms – more 'logos' than 'mythos'.

'Story' and 'narrative' often seem to be used synonymously in the literature. However, this thesis draws a clear distinction between story and narrative. Narrative, as defined above, may be used within story (Gabriel 1998:156). In this thesis, 'story' means a social actor's rendition of a story that is not necessarily 'true' in a factual sense. As Gabriel says, 'the truth of a story lies not in its accuracy but in its meaning' (1998:136). This fitted perfectly with the epistemological and ontological perspectives outlined above.

Perhaps data about emotion could be constructed using stories. It seemed that there might be scope for working with stories, in groups, in a participatory way, to elicit information about emotional labour, without asking for 'true' stories and so potentially exposing the raw emotions of participants and compromising their safety and confidentiality. But how, exactly, could this be done? The literature on storytelling in organisations, the use of stories as data for various types of research including participatory action research and evaluation research, and the use of stories for group learning in professional education, was reviewed in search of clues.

Green and Hart used stories as a basis for discussion with peer groups, and found that 'Participants in the group setting ... obtain immediate feedback on their own views and constructions of reality, as their stories are challenged, corroborated or marginalized by their peers. Peers provide an appropriate audience for the 'stories' ...' (Green and Hart 2000:24). They were collecting data from children, but on close reading it seemed possible that their method could be used with adults. Labonte, Feather and Hills, drawing on earlier work with adults by Labonte (1996) using stories in evaluation research, also suggest that supportive peer relationships help participants to reflect on meaning (Labonte, Feather and Hills 2000:97). Winter and his colleagues, using stories with peer groups in professional education, also found that this facilitated reflection on meaning (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:23).

The system of using stories as springboards for discussion for data construction within a participatory framework has been developed most fully to date by health evaluation researchers such as Tineke Abma in the Netherlands and Ron Labonte and his colleagues in Canada. Labonte, Feather and Hills see the use of stories as a way to understand meaning in social life (2000:97). For them, it is not the stories themselves that produce such meaning, but the structured discussion that follows; they regard this as adding rigour to their approach (ibid). Abma says that her workshops 'create a social context that enables groups of people with an interest in the learning process to communicate experiences, relate stories to each other and collaboratively create meaning ... The openness of stories enables narrators and listeners to retell a story and to derive meanings from it that are relevant in their own social context' (Abma 2003:223). This is not about creating fixed meanings, but about enabling dialogue that 'reveals only the radically ambiguous nature of meaning, the continual play of indeterminate meaning' (Schwandt 2001:273) between multiple viewpoints. Abma also found that structured dialogue enabled difficult and even taboo subjects to be discussed from multiple points of view (Abma 2003:235). Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska echo this, saying that 'the fictional form creates emotional safety for both writers and readers: although stories raise questions and previously unconscious themes, the discussion of a story does not provide final answers or a diagnosis, but opens up further lines of reflective thought' (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:23).

Winter and his colleagues favour written over spoken stories, because they can have a more complex and allusive structure and may be reread, considered and analysed over time and in the light of alternative interpretations (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:6). However, Kellas and Manusov look at this the other way around, saying 'the methodology of having participants write their narratives may have sacrificed some of the natural richness and detail that accompanies oral tellings to relevant audiences' (2003:304). Writing is both honest and dishonest: it is an excellent way of maintaining knowledge but can also influence, change or ossify that knowledge; it does not have the immediacy or the intimacy of speech (Clifford

1986:118). And in the context of this research, if a story–discussion framework were used, the discussions could potentially be much more revealing than the stories themselves, as they would offer opportunities for the themes in the stories to be unpicked and new meanings made.

However, stories, whether written or told, are made of language, which only approximates the reality it purports to describe (Melucci 1996:9, Adams 2003:228) and is deficient in communicating extreme experience (Redfern 2000:105). Because of language's approximation of reality, every story told includes elements of prevarication (Grumet 1987:322). From the theoretical perspective underpinning the methodological approach of this research, that is a distinct advantage, as story can therefore reflect more fully the complex and ambiguous nature of people's awareness of their environment (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:41). The organisational context is always complex (Olesen and Bone 1999:322–23, Parker 2000:223) and ambiguous (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:206), and stories are also always ambiguous (ibid:22). Complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty are intimately linked (Melucci 1996:2). As shown in chapter 2, partnership working is complex, and as shown in chapter 3, so is emotion – therefore these concepts are also ambiguous and uncertain. Sims argues that stories are particularly useful for making sense of complex, ambiguous, uncertain environments:

When a story is being told, the possibility of several things going on at once, of several different – and possibly apparently contradictory – interlocking modes of understanding coexisting, means that complex and ambiguous situations do not have to be reduced to unitary propositions. Such complexity and ambiguity are seen as of the essence of storytelling, rather than as annoying by-products. (Sims 2004:158)

Using concepts from the literature reviewed above, a method was devised. In essence, this method involved working with small groups of peers; asking each person to tell a short story – explicitly not a 'true' story – that illustrated some dimension of how it feels to work in partnership as a Sure Start manager; and using each story as a springboard for discussion of what the story reveals. My role in this

data construction process would be to provide the venue and refreshments, ensure the ground rules were maintained and record the session.

An initial research design to test the usefulness of this storytelling–discussion format was piloted with Sure Start managers. It seemed likely that four was the minimum number of participants needed for a useful group session (CHART West Midlands 2002:8). Simple calculations showed that four people could participate in a half-day session. Each of them would be asked to prepare and tell a very short story, just two to three minutes long, about how it feels to work in partnership as a Sure Start manager. It would be made clear that this was not expected to be a true story, but a story that their colleagues would recognise as authentic. The session was designed so that each story would act as a springboard for a semi-structured discussion: each listener would give their initial reaction/feedback, uninterrupted by the others; the teller would then give his/her reaction to that feedback, including anything that had surprised them; a more general discussion would follow. This followed the ‘reflection circle’ format used by Labonte, Feather and Hills (2000). The ground rules were adapted from the work of Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska (1999). There would of course be no financial cost to participants; I paid for the venue, refreshments and lunch. All these details were set out in an information sheet and consent form for participants (appendix 3), given to them in advance so that they could think through their willingness (or otherwise) to be involved.

For the pilot, there was no plan to structure the discussion beyond the initial ‘reflection circle’ unless it appeared to be necessary. If it did seem necessary, contextual reasoning would be used to ask questions that occurred to me at the time, based on what had already been said. It was thought that the data from the pilot might lead to ideas for ways to structure the discussions in future storytelling sessions. The decision was taken to give each participant 40 minutes for the telling and discussion of their story, and to have a final 40-minute session for evaluation, structured with questions formulated beforehand and on the day.

Data Construction

The pilot MSM session was held in November 2003 in Shire. The evaluation session at the end was designed to help shape the method for future data construction. I participated in this session and led a discussion of some of the dilemmas raised by the MSM, such as: was 40 minutes an appropriate length of time for discussion? (Yes.) Did the ground rules create an emotionally safe environment for participants? (Yes.) Is this method best used with a peer group? (The group saw this as an essential component of an emotionally safe environment.) Would it have worked differently if I'd asked for real-life stories? (It would have been more emotionally difficult, and the group doubted that they would have dealt with such real issues.) What was difficult about the process for participants? (Ending stories, and concentrated listening over a long period.) What was easy? (Starting stories, listening, and being together as a group.) What was useful? (Time for reflection and the opportunity to really think things through.) Could the outcome of the session have been achieved some other way? (Not through any other professional or social situation that the participants could think of.)

With reference to real-life stories, Amy² said

I think real life is made of too many fragments and threadlets of stories that are all happening concurrently. By doing it this way, by setting a remit to weave a tale, you actually can paint the bigger picture of the whole environment, the whole feeling and the whole underpinning feeling that's there. (pilot evaluation, lines 229–233)

This supports the suggestion by Sims (2004) that stories are particularly helpful in making sense of complex, ambiguous, uncertain issues.

With reference to discussing similar issues in different professional situations, Rebecca said

² All participants' names have been changed.

If you had a meeting to discuss your issues around partnership working there's sometimes a danger that you get into this kind of spiral down element, don't you, and you could have had a sense of going away from that meeting thinking this is really depressing and we're not going to change those, where this is much more about finding parallels within everybody's experiences and really having time to think of them, think about it in different levels and coming out with different meanings, so I think you avoid that kind of spiral down element. (pilot evaluation, lines 396–403)

This supports the assertions of Labonte, Feather and Hills (2000) and Abma (2003) that stories are one way we can come to understand meanings in social life that may not otherwise be readily available.

I was able to make a partial assessment of how the MSM had affected the relationships of the people involved. One participant perceived a group-building effect, and the others agreed, saying that they thought they would meet together as a group more regularly as a result. They suggested I contact them again after three or six months to assess the longer-term impact. I telephoned each of them after three months, and asked whether the exercise had had any long-term impact on them as a group; as individuals; and whether there was any other feedback they wanted to offer. Three out of four said they had felt a long-term impact on them as a group and as individuals, although not in the way they expected because they had not yet met again as a group. The fourth, Patrick, said it had had an impact on the day, but no long-term impact. He added '*I would have thought maybe some of the others would get more out of it long-term than I would, I don't know why I'm saying that, maybe about people's personalities and the way they work and creative attitudes.*' The others defined the impact in a variety of ways. Pam defined it in terms of group and individual health:

My impression was that it was quite healthy for all of us, because it gave us a chance to say things that perhaps we might not otherwise say, and because you were using a

kind of abstract idea of a story that was either thinly veiled, a fairy story type of thing, it actually gave you a chance to say something and explore what things felt like.

Amy defined it in terms of group resources:

... on at least three occasions since our training day [i.e. the MSM session] we've been aware of storytelling and its value as a methodology in working with people. We're talking in particular about ways that parents might contribute to a parents' conference, last year some felt brave enough to stand and tell their tales, and were quite carried away by the emotion of the event, but it was unstructured, we're all conscious that we could work with parents to tell their stories, to have an impact on service providers ... it has obviously given us a shared reference point in planning our work, the four of us had been through an experience together that gave us a new language and a new tool at our command if we wanted it.

And Rebecca defined it in terms of a personal impact:

In combination with another piece of work I've been doing in Pen Green³ that's made me much more reflective about what I'm doing and why I'm doing it, and identifying my own needs more, and I'm becoming more feisty!

So it appears that any long-term impact did not affect the relationships of those involved to any great extent, and certainly no negative effect was reported.

As the pilot had worked so well, no changes were made. Two further MSM sessions were held, one in July 2004 in City, and one in January 2005 in Borders.

Each MSM session was attended by four Sure Start managers. Of the twelve participants, six were male and six female. Eleven were white and one of mixed race. All appeared to be in their 30s or 40s.

³ DfES training centre

The stories and discussions varied in duration and length. The stories are reproduced in appendix 4, and numerical information about the duration and length of the stories and discussions is in appendix 5.

All MSM sessions were recorded on minidisk and transcribed. Alldred and Gillies state that 'transcription tends to affirm a particular theoretical position about the relation between language and meaning' (2002:159). Chapter 3 showed that the relationship between language and meaning is complex and ambiguous, and that a researcher can act as an interpreter of the meanings she perceives in the language provided by participants. Some choices had to be made about how that language would be transcribed in order to extract some meanings to interpret. First, a decision was taken not to time pauses because, as shown in the Introduction, what people say tells us much more about their feelings and emotions than what they do not say. Therefore pauses were recorded as 'pause' or, if longer than a couple of seconds, 'long pause'. Second, while the first transcripts were as accurate as possible, including all repeated words, sounds like 'er' and 'um', and verbal tics such as 'sort of' and 'you know', these were then removed to make reading easier, and to reduce the enormous word count a little before the data was coded. Third, punctuation was used to reflect the speech patterns of each participant, rather than to break up the text into easily readable sentences. Each of these decisions inevitably represents a compromise between accuracy and pragmatic manageability. The ethical aspects of these dilemmas will be discussed below.

When transcribing, at times I could not make out what was being said because more than one person was speaking and/or laughing at the same time. This has been represented as (inaudible). Where more than one person was speaking and/or laughing at the same time, and I was able to make out what was being said, it was transcribed to follow the actual sequence as closely as possible. For example, in the passage:

Pam: you know, when people say things in meetings

Patrick: Interesting

Pam: rather than constantly trying to get our points across maybe we should be listening more and we could make our points more effective then (discussion of Pam's story, lines 366–371)

Pam did not stop speaking or pause, and Patrick said 'interesting' at the same time as Pam said 'rather than'.

Every effort was made to transcribe interjections such as 'yeah' and 'mmm', but at some points there were so many that it became impractical.

This has implications for the status of the data. I am confident that this method of recording and transcription captures all the words and sounds spoken by participants apart from their verbal tics, except where more than one person was speaking at a time and I was unable to decipher one or both of their words; instances of this are always brief and recorded as (inaudible); they occur 58 times in the 7 hours and 23 minutes of the MSM sessions (appendix 5). I am also confident that the data demonstrate what people say about how they may feel at times in the course of their work. The high level of agreement between participants supports this assertion, and this will be discussed further in chapters 5 and 6. Therefore the data can provide an initial insight into some kinds of emotional labour done by some Sure Start programme managers. This is only an initial insight because what participants say about how they feel at times in the course of their work will almost certainly not give a complete picture of all the different ways they feel – and there would be no way to tell from this research if it did. Also, the data does not necessarily demonstrate what participants are feeling as they participate.

As demonstrated in chapters 5 and 6, the data constructed by the MSM was extensive and rich.

Ethics

As has already been stated, ethical considerations permeated the whole of the research process. Edwards and Mauthner set out a framework for a feminist ethics of care (2002:23), and offer a 'contingent attempt to generate some guidelines for ethical research practice' arising out of that framework (ibid:29). These take the form of nine questions:

1. Who are the people involved in and affected by the ethical dilemma raised in the research?
2. What is the context for the dilemma in terms of the specific topic of the research and the issues it raises personally and socially for those involved?
3. What are the specific social and personal locations of the people involved in relation to each other?
4. What are the needs of those involved and how are they inter-related?
5. Who am I identifying with, who am I posing as other, and why?
6. What is the balance of personal and social power between those involved?
7. How will those involved understand our actions and are these in balance with our judgement about our own practice?
8. How can we best communicate the ethical dilemmas to those involved, give them room to raise their views, and negotiate with and between them?
9. How will our actions affect relationships between the people involved? (ibid:28–29)

These were referred to and adapted as necessary, and attempts made to address them, at key points in the research process.

Edwards and Mauthner do not put these questions forward as a definitive way of ensuring that research is ethical, but as potentially useful guidelines to thinking through ethical considerations and dilemmas. So answers were likely to be partial and contingent rather than complete and authoritative. However, every effort was made to address each question as fully as possible at each stage of the process.

This supported the reflexive approach taken to the research. A description of the way each question was adapted and considered when planning the data construction process is given here, as an illustration of how research ethics were approached in the process as a whole.

1. Who are the people involved in and affected by the data construction?

The participants and the researcher, and staff and other users of the venues used, would be directly involved and affected. It was also important to be mindful that others might be affected, including anyone the participants came into contact with in the course of their work or their personal lives. Being clear about who was explicitly and implicitly involved in this aspect of the research was necessary in order to consider the remaining questions.

2. What is the context for the data construction in terms of the specific topic of the research and the issues it raises personally and socially for those involved?

As the topic of the research is how it feels to work in partnership as a Sure Start manager, and emotion has a high profile in that, it could raise sensitive personal issues for participants. As the research topic was related to the work of participants, and the data construction would take place during their working day, it could be concluded that this would not raise social issues for them. However, given the high profile of emotion in the research topic, if the experience of participating in the MSM did have any adverse effect, it could affect participants socially as well as personally and professionally. Therefore it would be important to give potential participants full information about the research and the MSM before they agreed, or refused, to take part. Also, during the MSM care would need to be taken through the setting and maintaining of appropriate ground rules to make the experience emotionally safe for participants.

3. What are the specific social and personal locations of the people involved in relation to each other?

Here, again, professional locations were also a consideration. The participants were all professional peers. Each group member knew each of the others in their group

from professional contact. I knew that some group members socialised with other group members, although I did not know the extent of this. In my own professional capacity, I had done contract work with six of the twelve participants before the MSM sessions took place, and it was possible that I could have worked with any of them at any time (I did in fact work with a seventh just after the last MSM session, although the work was related to previous work for another participant in the same local authority area rather than to the MSM itself). I was also a personal friend of one participant before the MSM sessions (and became friendly with two others after the sessions: in one case this was as a direct result of a conversation at a meeting where I introduced the MSM to potential participants; the other was due to the work done with the seventh participant mentioned above). I did not devise the MSM, or approach specific potential participants, with the aim of gaining more contract work from them; rather, I approached people I already knew because I felt able to invite them to take part. However, my existing personal and professional contact with some of the participants created some issues that I needed to consider. For example, inviting them to take part could have been seen as a way of trying to solicit new contracts. I aimed to minimise this by making it clear at all times that I was very busy with existing contract work and not in need of further commissions, even when that wasn't entirely true. Also, within the research process I needed to treat each participant equally, regardless of other personal or professional contact. I achieved this during the MSM sessions by focusing on the task at hand, and found that in practice it was not a problem because participants were willing to do the same.

4. What are the needs of those involved and how are they inter-related?

My needs were to find people willing to participate in my research, and therefore to make the process sufficiently appealing to participants. Part of this was done by identifying some of the potential participants' needs and offering a way to meet them. I knew from experience that the isolated position of Sure Start managers meant that they often felt the need for support, while their busy working lives rarely enabled them to seek such support. The busyness of their working lives also meant that participants would need a data construction method that required minimal, or no, preparation from them before the event. I also knew that participants were

encouraged by the training they received to value opportunities for reflective learning about their professional practice. Finally, participants would need to feel they were getting something professionally useful from the MSM for them to be willing to give half a working day to the process. As a result, I presented the MSM as something that could potentially meet these needs.

5. Who is the researcher identifying with, who is she posing as other, and why?

I identified with the participants because I had worked alongside many of them, and others like them, for several years and felt that I understood and sympathised with their positions and difficulties. I also identified with them because of my own employment background: if I had continued with a career in children's services, I might well be a Sure Start manager today. Although in the MSM sessions I would be a researcher, not a participant, and therefore in a different role from the Sure Start managers, I was not posing them as 'other'; rather as colleagues bringing a different perspective from mine to the work we would be engaged in. I am not aware that I posed anyone as 'other' in planning the data construction.

6. What is the balance of personal and social power between those involved?

The balance of power between participants seemed equal because of the equality in their professional status and because they were all articulate and competent people. From my experience of working with Sure Start managers, I expected that mutual respect would be shown between participants. I felt that I was on a par with participants professionally, personally and socially. The participants and I were, of course, subject to the structural inequalities of power that exist in our society along the faultlines of gender, age, race and social class. Considering this question alerted me to the possibility that these might affect the MSM.

7. How will those involved understand the researcher's actions, and are these in balance with her judgement about her own practice?

All Sure Start managers are conversant with research as participants and commissioners, and some as researchers themselves. This gave me confidence that a full explanation of the research, including an opportunity for potential participants to

ask any questions they chose before they gave or withheld consent as well as during the process, would enable them to understand my actions. The information and consent sheet (appendix 3) was designed to help with this.

8. How can the researcher best communicate the ethical dilemmas to those involved, give them room to raise their views, and negotiate with and between them?

There is currently an ethical ideal in social research of involving participants fully in the research process, from designing the research to giving feedback on its write-up in draft before it is finalised (Birch and Miller 2002). Given the duration of doctoral research, and the busy lives of potential participants, it seemed likely that they would be unwilling to be involved beyond taking part in the data construction session. It seemed unlikely, for example, that they would welcome a telephone call some months later enquiring about whether they were happy with the compromises reached in transcribing the data (as outlined above).⁴ So, again, full information about the process would be given to participants before their consent was given or withheld. Also, an evaluation session would be built in at the end of the MSM in which any ethical dilemmas arising during the data construction process could be raised by participants, or by me, and discussed with the aim of resolving them.

9. How will the MSM affect relationships between the people involved?

As relationships already existed between participants, and between some participants and myself, and these relationships were already cordial, it seemed likely that the MSM would maintain or improve the quality of these relationships rather than having any adverse effect. However, in case of any unexpected adverse effect, verbal assurances would be given to all participants that they could withdraw consent to participation or use of their data at any time during or after an MSM session. Also, once again considering this question alerted me to the possibility of an adverse effect, and I decided that if I perceived that this could be happening, I would stop the MSM and discuss it with participants before proceeding or abandoning the process.

⁴ This was borne out when I offered participants the opportunity to read and give feedback on a final draft of this thesis and made it available to download from a password-protected website. Only two participants, Fred and Simon, contacted me to ask for the password, and neither offered any feedback.

After the pilot MSM session these questions were reconsidered in the light of my experience of the session and the participants' evaluations. As shown above, the pilot confirmed that setting and maintaining the ground rules, and using fictional stories as a basis for discussion, had a particularly positive effect on participants' feelings of emotional safety during the MSM. I did not find out anything about the extent of socialising or other personal interaction that might have existed between participants, so I needed to remain aware that this could prove an issue for future groups if boundaries became blurred during the MSM process. Participants said that they valued the MSM experience because it gave them time to reflect on their work and their experience of their work, which they said was unusual for them. They also said they valued its creativity. Mutual respect was shown at all times between participants, and between the participants and myself, and there was no evidence that societal power inequalities affected the MSM. Participants did appear to have a clear understanding of the reasons for my actions. To my surprise, the pilot participants offered me the option of making a follow-up phone call to each of them to assess any longer-term effects of the MSM, which I accepted. There was no evidence of any adverse effect on relationships between people involved; in fact, there was a suggestion of a small positive effect (which was borne out during the follow-up phone calls, as explained above).

As a result of this ethical re-evaluation of the MSM, the next data construction sessions were carried out in the same way as the pilot.

Data Coding And Interpretation

Qualitative data analysis is often not clearly articulated in books and journal articles (Olesen *et al* 1994:111; Robertson and Dearling 2004:205). Bryman and Burgess, in their conclusion to an entire book about qualitative data analysis, state that 'it is still not absolutely clear how issues or ideas emerge in order to end up in the finished written product' (1994:224). This still applies to books and papers published today,

which may be because it is very difficult to spell out exactly how qualitative data analysis is done.

The analysis of qualitative textual data is always to some extent a process of interpretation or translation. One set of words is taken up by a researcher, scrutinized, sorted, sifted, juggled, probed and interrogated, and in the process another set of words is assembled to explain the first set. In the complex work of interpretative analysis, it is essential to reduce the inevitable ambiguity and uncertainty as far as possible by attempting to ensure that any interpretations made are clearly derived from the data, rather than from a pre-existing structure of meaning that has been imposed onto the data (Mason 1996:150, Robson 2002:171) – although, of course, as suggested in the Introduction, this can only be done to a certain extent given the inevitable influence of the researcher's preconceived ideas.

One of the reasons it is difficult to explain methods of interpreting qualitative data is that the process itself is challenging, requiring the full use of intellectual and creative faculties. This is especially so when the data is extensive and rich. The three half-day sessions of the MSM that were conducted for this research, encompassing twelve stories and their discussions, produced approximately 65,000 words of data to read and interpret. All the participants were fully engaged in the process throughout (with the exception of Sadie from the City group, who missed one story and most of the following discussion to attend a health appointment), so the data they provided was rich in vocabulary, themes and meaning.

To interpret such a large, rich body of data, it seemed sensible to use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Several packages were investigated: Ethnograph, Qualrus, Atlas.ti, Decision Explorer, the freeware AnSWR, and NVivo. In the end NVivo was selected because it is a very flexible and responsive software tool that enables the researcher to play with the data quickly and easily, thereby encouraging a creative, exploratory approach to interpretation (Gibbs 2002:xxii-xxiii). It also makes it easy for the researcher to use both coding frames and emergent coding, and to move easily between the raw data, the codes and the

theory being built in the process. The way in which this facilitates an interpretative approach is explained below.

With any system of qualitative data interpretation, the first task is to bring some order to the data and capture associated ideas. Coding 'is the process of identifying and recording one or more discrete passages of text ... that, in some sense, exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea' (Gibbs 2002:57). In NVivo the researcher defines and names the codes. The name of a code may or may not be a word or phrase taken directly from the data itself. The researcher can assign a code to a section of text of any length from a single letter to an entire document (single word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, part of a sentence, part of a paragraph, and so on).

All the data was coded three times, using three different 'coding frames' or ways of looking at the data. The first coding frame was bounded by my own experience, understanding, feelings and knowledge; in short, everything I could perceive in the data in the context of my research. As discussed in the Introduction, in Gadamer's terms, this was designed to include all my preconceived ideas. This produced emergent codes derived directly from the data, often (although not exclusively) using language found therein to define and name codes. The second coding frame was bounded by the themes and issues raised by the literature on partnership and organisational emotion reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis: initially power; complexity; trust; emotion labels; feelings suggested by images, juxtapositions or articulations between concepts; and resolutions to emotional dissonance. The codes here were structured by the relevant literatures.

The original plan was to use only these two coding frames. To begin with there was some overlap because the first coding frame already covered some of the issues raised by the second. However, as I switched between the two coding frames, I learned how they each emphasised different aspects of the data and began to see the distinctions more clearly.

For example, this data segment

It's trying to absolutely keep all those people feeling part of it and feeling in touch and feeling still stimulated about it and not being part of a local authority, not seeing themselves within that mould, but seeing themselves empowered and seeing themselves as valued and important in that. (discussion of Luke's story, lines 419–422)

had several codes in the first coding frame. '*It's trying to absolutely keep all those people feeling part of it and feeling in touch*' was coded with 'distance' (together with most of the preceding paragraph, which was about the difficulty of keeping a team of around 40 people working in several different areas in touch with the partnership as a whole); '*not seeing themselves within that mould, but seeing themselves empowered and seeing themselves as valued and important in that*' was coded with 'perception' (because it is all about how people do and do not see themselves); and the whole segment was coded with 'hierarchy', 'layers or levels', and 'management' (as part of larger segments dealing with issues of managing a hierarchical team within a hierarchical local authority).

In the second coding frame, the segment above was entirely coded with 'feelings' (general code denoting emotional issues for people other than participants), and 'responsibility' (the over-riding feeling being expressed by the participant), and it was also coded with 'complexity' (as part of a larger segment about the complexity created by a team of around 40 people working in several different areas).

Once the initial coding was complete and the preliminary interpretation had been done, two things became clear: one, that there were many more stories in the data than the initial stories alone, and two, that the first two coding frames were not enabling a full exploration of these stories. So I turned to the narrative analysis literature to help me devise a third coding frame.

The literature on narrative in research is vast (Riessman 2002b:229) and encompasses many academic disciplines (ibid:217). I wanted to find concepts that

might be useful in constructing a coding frame, so I focused on literature that explained how narrative analysis could be done.

The terminology of narrative analysis is variable and contested. Narratives have been described and categorised in many ways, including: restitution, quest and chaos narratives (Frank 1998); personal narratives (Riessman 2002b:219); negotiated, sense-making, shared, group, organisational, legitimacy and hegemonic narratives (Currie and Brown 2003). There are also many ways to analyse narratives once they have been defined and sorted (Feldman *et al* 2004:149). But there is general agreement that narrative analysis is interpretative (e.g. Riessman 2002b:256, Currie and Brown 2003:583, Feldman *et al* 2004, Greenhalgh, Russell and Swinglehurst 2005).

Even experienced narrative analysts can find it difficult to establish what, exactly, a story is (e.g. Riessman 2002b:230). It seemed that I needed to approach the data first with a question: 'Is this a story?'. Most students of stories appear to agree that a story has a beginning, a middle and an end, and can be seen as a 'stand-alone' tale as well as in context within the surrounding text (*ibid*). I decided to use these criteria to provide answers to the initial question.

When I had identified a story within the data, it might be useful to find or devise a way to categorise it, so that I could start from its structure as Riessman recommends (2002b:254). Thinking about the data in the light of the narrative analysis literature, four categories seemed to hold the most potential: personal stories (Riessman 2002b:219), experience stories (Ochs and Capps 2001:252–259, Riessman 2004:707), group stories (Currie and Brown 2003:563) and performance stories (Riessman 2004:708).

The next potentially helpful move could be to define some key elements of the stories and their telling. Again, in thinking about the data and the literature, five key elements seemed potentially the most useful: voice (Wortham 2001:40, Patterson 2002:1),

typical character (Riessman 2004:708), audience (Gergen 2001:vii, Riessman 2004:708), rehearsal or rehearsed (Huxham, Sims and Beech 2005:28).

Finally, I knew from working with the data that some of the discussion was about story and stories, and I wanted to explore this more fully. Consideration of the data suggested three promising categories: story making, story changing and story mixing.

These concepts became the third coding frame (appendix 9). Although I drew on the narrative analysis literature for the concepts, I do not see the analysis based on this coding as a form of narrative analysis, but as a way of interpreting the stories told during the MSM. This is because, as explained above, I am primarily dealing with stories rather than narrative, i.e. I am more concerned with their meanings than with their level of factual accuracy (Gabriel 1998:139).

It can be seen that although the three coding frames offer quite different ways of looking at the data, they are all relevant in the context of this thesis. This system of using three coding frames for data interpretation is part of a wider approach to triangulation that permeates the whole of the research process with the aim of making useful interpretations and creating generalisable meanings. Triangulation has become a contested term in qualitative research. It has its origins in physical sciences such as navigation and land surveying, where two known points are used to establish the location of a third. It was originally used by qualitative researchers who used more than one method to collect data, on the basis that if findings were similar when data collection methods were different, that would prove the validity of the findings (what Massey (1999) calls a 'Type A Error'). Triangulation here is taken further, being intended as a 'potent agent for reflexive awareness, for an enhanced understanding of how research findings are constituted in the creative process of the research, rather than being pre-existent and simply awaiting discovery' (Bloor 1997:49). As such, it is not just about different methods of data collection or construction (Hilton [www](http://www.hilton.org.uk)).

As shown at the beginning of this chapter, data was in fact procured using different methods. Textual data was constructed via the MSM at three points within a 15-month period, during which the environment around Sure Start managers was changing rapidly; each data construction point has a different historical context. And, as discussed above, the data was interpreted using three different coding frames. Also, three main bodies of literature were reviewed and drawn upon as a background to the data construction: partnership literature, emotion literature, and methodological literature including that on narrative analysis. The overall aim is to look at things from different angles, not to try to 'prove' anything, but to ensure that my thought processes were not constricted by too narrow a viewpoint or – as far as possible – by my preconceived ideas.

If one body of literature was used as a basis for data constructed on a single occasion, using just one method, and coded using one coding frame, the researcher might have fewer options for comparing and contrasting different elements of the research. A wider approach to triangulation assists with the interpretation of data and the making of meanings by helping to widen the researcher's view of the data, the contexts in which it was constructed and the bodies of academic literature with which the research is connected. The 'compare and contrast' technique that this enables is often helpful. Even where a question yields little by way of an answer, such as: 'What does the partnership literature tell us about the emotional labour of Sure Start managers?' – answer: 'very little' – this is in itself a useful piece of the jigsaw.

This approach to triangulation is not a panacea. There are still constraints caused by the limits of the literature, the limits of the methodology and the limits of the researcher's own perception. Taking a wide approach to triangulation may have caused me to miss things in the data that I might have picked up using a closer focus. Also, the research may appear less neat and tidy than research carried out with a narrower approach. But the wide approach used has helped to make wider, fuller, more holistic interpretations of my data than would have been possible if fewer other issues had been taken into account in the process. And as a result, it is possible that the meanings created may be more generalisable.

The data was coded to saturation, to use Strauss & Corbin's term (1998:136), i.e. the point where trawling through the data yet again yields little or nothing in the way of new coding. Then the codes were reviewed. First, each code that had been used only once or twice was checked, to assess whether it was truly a single or double instance of something in the data, or whether it was a subject that had been coded in another way elsewhere in the data so that the coding needed revision. For example, in the first coding frame the word 'objectives' had been given a single-word coding once. A text search established that the word did indeed only appear once in the data. Then the paragraph in which it appeared was studied, and showed that it appeared in the phrase 'targets and objectives'. 'Targets' had also been given a single-word coding, which appeared ten times in five stories/discussions. The decision was made to change the coding so that the phrase 'targets and objectives' was coded with 'targets', as the phrase in its context was tautologous, and the code 'objectives' was deleted. This demonstrates another aspect of NVivo's flexibility: the coding may be changed at any time during the coding and interpretation processes.

Another example came from the second coding frame. The code 'trapped' had been used twice in two stories/discussions. The code 'constrained' had been used 13 times in six stories/discussions. This led me to wonder whether the text coded as 'trapped' could legitimately be combined with the text coded as 'constrained'. All the text coded with both was carefully re-examined, and I concluded that combining them would detract from their meaning, as the text coded as 'trapped' expressed more helplessness and lack of agency than the text coded as 'constrained'. So in this case the coding was left unchanged.

Once the process of review had been completed with all three coding frames, the data was approached from the opposite end. The codes that appeared most frequently were used to 'slice' through the data, extracting segments from all the documents where that code had been used. For example, in the second coding frame, the code 'power' had been used 128 times and had appeared in all 12 stories/discussions; the code 'identification' (where an apparently unconscious

change of grammatical tense denotes a participant identifying with the story character being discussed) had been used 31 times and had appeared in 11 stories/discussions; and the code 'complexity' had been used 36 times and had appeared in 10 stories/discussions. The data coded with each code was extracted and reviewed to establish what light it could shed on the research questions. This is a constant process of asking questions and finding answers. For example, in the initial consideration of the code 'power', my internal dialogue went something like this:

'The 'power' code was used in each story/discussion. Hmmm, that's interesting. I wonder how many other codes were used in every story/discussion? Let's check... oh, OK, just 'amusement' and 'curiosity'. I wonder whether I should change 'curiosity' to 'questioning', I'm not sure the name of the code describes accurately enough what's going on there. That's not about power, though, so to save going off at a tangent I'll just make a note. There we are. Now, what kind of power are we talking about? Let's extract the data and have a look. Here we go. Well, it seems to be all about hierarchical power-over. Now that's interesting, too, because I would have said that Sure Start programme managers didn't have a zero-sum approach to power. But maybe they do. Let's read some more. Yes, it is all about power-over. I'd better write something about that in the 'findings' chapter, I'll just make a note of that. Now, I wonder whether something else will demonstrate that the participants don't see power as finite. Or maybe they do; perhaps I just want to believe that they don't because that's the way I think myself. Could I create that in the data just by looking for it? That may be a bit far-fetched, and anyway it's a discussion for the reflexivity section, so I'll just make another note and come back to it at a later date. There. Now, about this 'power' code. I wonder whether the first coding frame could shed any light on it. I remember the code 'control' was high up in that one. I'll go and have a look, and see where that gets me.'

This process of 'interrogating the data' went on until saturation was reached, or until no new findings were being drawn from the questioning. Writing about the findings

took place concurrently, mostly in disjointed sentences and paragraphs. All codes were double-checked to ensure that they had been considered. The writing was then reviewed and revised, with reference back to the relevant literatures in the process, working towards coherence, readability and narrative structure.

The MSM – Advantages and Disadvantages

The MSM is open to criticism for being an artificial method of constructing data. It may be seen as more artificial than some forms of action research and participant observation. Also, it is arguable that it is more artificial than the more traditional methods of data collection, such as focus groups or interviews, because the stories are fictional or fictionalised. However, the discussions of the issues raised by the stories are not necessarily more artificial than a focus group discussion. It could also be argued that the discussions in the MSM are less artificial than focus group discussions, because the fictionalisation and the carefully structured ground rules allow for more authentic discussion because they help participants to feel safe (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:23). Sims suggests that MSM-type discussions may be less artificial than other research techniques when used with managers, because ‘an important part of what managers spend their time doing is telling stories to one another and developing stories together to explain and understand what they are trying to do’ (2004:157). MSM participants have said that the structure enables them to feel safe in the research encounter, and that this enables the discussion to be more ‘real’. For example, the participants in the pilot evaluation engaged with this issue very thoroughly:

Helen: Do you think it would have worked differently if I'd asked you to tell more real life type stories? What difference do you think that might have made?

Patrick: Well mine wasn't that far from real life, it's probably easier to tell, it's probably more, easier to interpret, I think if you actually ask somebody to talk about a meeting you went to I think that makes it a bit much, bring it into real real life, that does make it more difficult, it's always easier to put some sort of a pretend spin on it, but maybe you do exaggerate issues as well, but

Pam: I also think though that if you were asked to do something say more spontaneous that was much more directly and completely related to what you did in your work, I think that might be very difficult as well, because you get tied up with what you do, and so you have an emotional reaction to what you do as well, and that might be even more difficult to handle. Do you... or am I being a bit... do you know what I mean? It's that thing about if you're feeling vulnerable or isolated or whatever you're feeling, because of pressures that are being put on you through work, or you're not having a good time at the point when this is done, to then have to in inverted commas "expose yourself"

(laughter)

Pam: and to all that sort of emotional baggage, could actually be very difficult. I don't know, I think it could be.

Rebecca: I think you could tell possibly real stories if they're kind of positive floppy bunny, and I think the fantasy helps when you're bottoming out difficult issues as well, and I think some of thinking through this story about thinking of agendas and trying not to label particular groups or individuals very clearly, that the fantasy element helped with that, and I think if you were asked to tell real stories then you might get more positive stories rather than some of the real issue stories.

Pam, Amy: mmm

Helen: That's interesting

Pam: You know, people would pick what they felt comfortable telling.

Rebecca: mmm

Pam: Yep. (pilot evaluation, lines 184–227)

Patrick and Pam agreed that asking overtly for a real-life story would make the process 'more difficult'. Pam clarified that the difficulty would be because 'you have an emotional reaction to what you do'. Rebecca suggested that asking for real-life stories could skew the data because 'you might get more positive stories rather than some of the real issue stories', and Pam agreed that 'people would pick what they felt comfortable telling'. Amy did not take an active part in this discussion, but indicates her agreement with an 'mmm'. These participants seem sure that the use of fictional stories enabled them to reveal real and difficult issues. Pam confirmed this later in

the evaluation when she said '*I know they weren't real stories, but the themes that run through them are very real.*' (pilot evaluation, lines 393–394)

Another possible criticism of the MSM is that the emphasis on context may reduce the generalisability of the findings. This criticism would be likely to come from a very different epistemological and ontological perspective than mine. As shown in the Introduction, context is more or less relevant in all social interactions, and I believe that to ignore its importance would weaken this research.

Compared to other methods of data collection or construction, the MSM has a number of potential disadvantages. For example, it requires a significant input of time from participants, half a working day at least, which may be off-putting for busy people. The MSM needs an absolute minimum of three participants, so sessions may be cancelled if potential participants drop out. It gives a one-off snapshot that, it could be argued, might be different on a different day, even with the same participants. The MSM can be quite complicated for the researcher to organise: diaries must be co-ordinated, a suitable venue found, refreshments arranged, and so on. As an innovative method of data construction, it might require more careful presentation to participants than traditional methods of data collection that may be more familiar to them. Also the researcher needs to be well prepared and able to maintain the ground rules within the MSM session.

These disadvantages will understandably deter some researchers from using the technique. However, this thesis also shows the strengths of the MSM as a method of constructing rich data about sensitive topics in a way that benefits participants as well as the researcher. In appropriate contexts these advantages will outweigh the disadvantages. And working with a peer group in a partnership setting seems to be a very appropriate context.

Methodological Validity

It was important for the research to be rigorous, although the traditional benchmarks of objectivity, reliability and validity did not seem relevant or appropriate. Denscombe draws on a range of research to support his assertion that 'the issues of objectivity, reliability and validity are as relevant to qualitative research as to any other approach' (1998:212). Robson, however, cites the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) in suggesting that these criteria are not appropriate for assessing qualitative research, and proposes the alternatives of credibility, transferability and confirmability (1993:403). Credibility requires the researcher to 'demonstrate that the enquiry was carried out in a way which ensures that the subject of the enquiry was accurately identified and described' (ibid). Transferability means that the research could 'be used in the development of further studies in a variety of settings' (ibid:405). Confirmability means that there is enough information for readers of the research to 'judge the adequacy of the process' and 'assess whether the findings flow from the data' (ibid:406). The aim was for this research to be credible, transferable and confirmable. The extent to which it proves to be so – or not – will be discussed in chapter 9.

It also seemed important for the research to be relevant. Historically, there has been something of a gulf between academic theory and professional practice (Thompson 2000:2). In the field of social care, research needs to engage with practice, and practice with theory. In the literature, there are a number of definitions of, and checklists of criteria for, academic rigour, but the term 'relevance' is rarely defined. For me, rigorous social research is well-founded, convincing and defensible within an academic framework, as well as relevant to practitioners; and 'relevance' means being able to make a positive difference to the working lives of practitioners and therefore to the users of the services they provide. In social research, academic rigour and professional relevance need not be seen as opposing poles; they can be viewed as closely linked (Thompson 2000:54-55,61-62). The story of a piece of research and the interpretations made therein, as written in this thesis, may provide much insight into professional issues and problems (Waring 2002:56).

Conclusion

This chapter began by setting the research questions in the context of my epistemological and ontological perspectives, which combine elements from premodern, modern and postmodern theorising. This provides a clear illustration of the broad overall approach to the research asserted in the Introduction to this thesis. It also emphasises the situated nature of knowledge and rejects 'objective truth' as the holy grail of the researcher, focusing instead on meaning in context.

'Story' and 'narrative' were defined and some research techniques using story were discussed. The MSM was outlined and its pilot session described. This proved to be an effective way of gathering rich qualitative data about emotional experience, so two more sessions were conducted. The cleaned-up transcripts of these three sessions yielded around 65,000 words of data.

The ethical approach to the research was described, and an ethical evaluation of the MSM pilot session was used as an illustrative case study.

NVivo software was used to store and code the data. Codes were devised with the help of three coding frames: one for emergent coding based on the researcher's perceptions and ideas; one based on the partnership and emotion literatures as set out in chapters 2 and 3; and one based on the narrative analysis literature. This was part of a wider approach to triangulation, which again fits with the broad overall approach to the research. An iterative procedure based on grounded theory principles was used to code and interpret the data to saturation. The first two coding frames contributed to a thematic interpretation of the data (chapter 5) and the third to a story interpretation (chapter 6). Some advantages and disadvantages of the MSM were discussed, and this topic will be returned to in chapter 9 when the overall rigorousness of the research methodology will be assessed, following the data interpretation, for credibility, transferability, confirmability, rigour and relevance.

But first, the next two chapters will demonstrate the richness of the data in detail by offering a thorough review of the interpretation conducted through all three coding frames.

Chapter Five – Thematic Interpretation

Introduction

This chapter outlines the thematic interpretation of the data, based on the first two coding frames. As shown in the previous chapter, the first was an emergent coding frame and the second was primarily constructed around themes found in the partnership and emotion literatures. However, as this chapter will show, the major themes emerging from the data were similar to the themes found in the partnership and emotion literatures (chapters 2 and 3) – i.e. power, trust, complexity, communication, identity, performance, tension and conflicting agendas – with a specific focus on managing these in a partnership setting. These major themes were found woven through the data, with many minor themes also appearing. All of the major themes are discussed in detail in this chapter, as well as those minor themes that intersect with them in the quoted data excerpts.

As discussed in chapter 4, the data coding and interpretation was carried out using a complex and holistic approach to the data in particular and the research in general. For clarity, each major theme has been discussed in a separate section of this chapter. Therefore the major themes may appear to be straightforward and discrete, though in fact they are inextricably intertwined throughout the data. At times, the discussion of one major theme will touch on issues related to several others.

There is no simple split between the ‘partnership’ and ‘emotion’ aspects of the data. The emotions found to be associated with each major theme within the data will be described in this chapter. This study makes tentative initial suggestions about possible links between the management of certain issues and specific emotions. However, the correlations found in the data cannot lead to a conclusion that certain themes can be definitively linked with specific emotions. The initial suggestions made for the links found in this data are discussed in this chapter and summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 – Initial Suggestions for Links between Emotions and Themes

MANAGEMENT OF:	SEEMS TO BE LINKED WITH FEELINGS OF:
Power and power imbalances	Powerlessness, frustration, isolation, danger, threat, discomfort, depression
Trust	Trust and mistrust
Complexity	Anxiety, uncertainty
Communication	Joy, frustration
Identity	Responsibility, danger, supported, unsupported, isolation, frustration, constrained
Conflicting agendas	Desire, frustration, discomfort, powerlessness, space, distance, separation
Tensions	Fear, frustration
Performance	Excitement, fear

After the discussion of the major themes and the emotions that seem to be linked with them in this research, there is a more general discussion of Sure Start managers' emotions as shown through the data, and of the ways in which the participants worked in their discussions to create and share meaning.

(Please note: in the rest of this chapter, words and phrases in **bold** refer to the names of codes. The meaning of each code is given in a footnote on each page where it is used. The meanings and frequencies of the codes discussed in this chapter and taken from the first (emergent) coding frame are in appendix 6; those taken from the second (literature-based) coding frame – including emotions – are in appendix 7. Words and phrases in *italics* are quotes from the data, and are referenced accordingly. Participants are listed by their groups in appendix 5.)

Management of Power, Power Inequalities and Power Imbalances

Chapter 2 showed that Sure Start Unit policy documents exhort Sure Start partnerships to reduce inequality within their partnerships, ensure all voices are heard, and develop a sense of shared purpose. In this context, it might be expected that stories about how it feels to work as the manager of a Sure Start

partnership would express feelings about collaborative endeavour and achievement, with – to use Huxham and Vangen's terminology as discussed in chapter 2 – most emphasis on power-to and power-for. However, in the context of the academic partnership literature, it is perhaps not surprising that although the stories did focus on how it felt to work in partnership, each story included clear expressions of how it felt to work within a hierarchy and to be subject to – and sometimes required to exercise – power-over. These were depicted in many different ways: computers controlling humans; ponies threatening smaller forest animals; senior politicians visiting Sure Start programmes; circus ringmasters. This suggests that to Sure Start managers, the dynamic balance of power between agencies and groups within partnerships feels more like a hierarchy with a 'pecking order' than like an equal partnership.

The discussions reflected this. For example, in Pam's story, Princess Susan was commanded by her father the king to provide a circus, to reduce the perceived problem of boredom in a nearby village. In the middle of the discussion of her story, the Shire group were debating the level of oppression or repression of the village population, and Pam says

*I just don't think they're listened to. By the king and the ministers and the whole setting up of it, and I think Susan was trying to do that, but was having things imposed from the ministers and the king, to actually be seen to be doing something, to set something up to do, the social engineering, because these people are bored! Do something about it! Because we have an agenda here, which means, that we won't allow boredom!*¹

This short excerpt embodies a number of important issues. First, the entire paragraph is coded with **control**², the code most often used within the first coding frame. Within that there is the minor theme of **imposed solutions**³. 'Susan... was having things imposed from the ministers and the king... to set something up

¹ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 656–661.

² From first coding frame, meaning that the text shows one person, group or organisation controlling another person, group or organisation.

³ From first coding frame, meaning a solution to a perceived problem imposed by a person, group or organisation outside the 'problem' situation.

to do...'. This issue arose in at least one story and discussion from each group. Both control and imposed solutions are clearly related to power-over. It would seem that although Sure Start guidance states that it is intended to be a bottom-up, community-needs-led initiative, as shown in chapter 2, in practice it does not appear to feel like that at all – at least, not to its managers. (And a truly community-needs-led initiative could be seen as simply an inversion of power-over rather than the possible redistribution of power suggested by some writers on partnership.) Participants seem to take the view that in fact Sure Start is a form of **social engineering**⁴; this term was used by each group in at least one of their discussions. The resulting tension, between apparent governmental aspirations to needs-led service provision and managerial perception that in fact Sure Start is a form of social engineering, leads to **conflicting agendas**⁵. For example, in Pam's story, the agenda of the king and his ministers is that boredom is bad and should not be allowed and something must be done about it. The Shire group's discussion of Pam's story identified that the villagers are analogous to a Sure Start community. We never find out what their agenda is, because while Princess Susan makes some effort to find out what they think about the circus, this is after the fact of the intervention and they were not asked what they thought about it in the first place. But when they are asked, they mostly grumble and complain about the changes being introduced, thereby indicating that to some extent their agenda conflicts with the agenda of the king and his ministers. This is reinforced by the difficulty Princess Susan expresses in managing the tension created between the two groups, which reduces her to lonely tears later in the story. Conflicting agendas is a major theme in the data, and issues raised by their management will be discussed in more detail below.

The only emotion explicitly discussed in the above section of Pam's story is **boredom**⁶, but underlying the whole paragraph is the sense of **frustration**⁷ – an

⁴ From first coding frame, meaning a process by which the Government uses its power to try to change aspects of society.

⁵ From first coding frame, meaning the agenda of one person, group or organisation conflicts with another in a partnership context.

⁶ From second coding frame: the feeling of being bored.

⁷ From second coding frame: the feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling.

emotion expressed and discussed at length by each group. **Perception**⁸ and **performance**⁹ are also common themes in the data; they are expressed together in the clause '*to actually be seen to be doing something*' – just doing something is not enough in this context, it must be seen by others if it is to have validity. These themes relate to the major theme of performance management, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Fred's story took an interesting approach to power. It began with the ending of the film *King Kong* and outlined a sequel in which King Kong had not actually died, but was rescued and enabled to live as a human by taking special tablets to reduce his size and by shaving every day. He married Fay Wray and they had two children, then separated amicably, after which Kong and the children went to live on the island where he had grown up. Towards the end of the story the island was invaded by the US government, resulting in many deaths – including those of all the leading characters – and a massive reduction in quality of life for the remaining inhabitants. This section of the story is the most extreme depiction of power-over and its abuse in any of the stories, yet power does not arise as a topic in the following discussion, although there was a full-length and wide-ranging discussion stimulated by the other issues that Fred's story raised. In fact the only specific reference to that very dramatic aspect of the story was a one-line joke by Elaine about how it reminded her of the war in Iraq. She made her joke in response to a comment from Simon, towards the end of the discussion of Fred's story, that he'd found it difficult to draw analogies between some elements of the story and working in partnership as a Sure Start manager. This suggests that the use of a hostile military invasion as an analogy for partnership working may have been too extreme to generate discussion.

Joe's story focused on the capital building work of Sure Start, and how this too can engender different perceptions and viewpoints centred around power. The story was about him telling a story, to two colleagues, about three people building a cathedral and how each of the three was working to a different agenda: for one it was just a way of earning money, the second took pride in his craftsmanship, and

⁸ From first coding frame, meaning the way something is viewed by an individual, group or organisation.

⁹ From first coding frame, meaning the act of performing before an audience.

the third believed in the religion that the cathedral stood for. Joe said that after telling the story to his colleagues:

*We kind of agreed that at times it's felt as though some of our aspirations were around building a cathedral, but that somebody else perhaps in another part of the city may belong to a different denomination or a different religion and want a different kind of building, and the long and the short of it was that perhaps the government has already in some respects decided to convert our cathedral into a Wetherspoons before the building has actually finished, and that our Children's Centre has become a childcare centre.*¹⁰

This extract again shows the common themes of **conflicting agendas**¹¹ and **imposed solutions**¹². Here, by using the extract as an analogy, we can deduce that Joe's Sure Start partnership has a different agenda for its capital project from that of people elsewhere in the city, but the (national) government has imposed a solution that takes no account of either agenda. The predominant emotion here is **desire**¹³, with different people wanting different things, and while efforts were being made in the city to resolve this, the government moved the goalposts. This again leads back to a feeling of **frustration**¹⁴.

In the discussion of Joe's story, Bob made the link between money and power by drawing an analogy between Sure Start managers and Victorian philanthropists:

Bob: Each one of us, in a sense, has come into a community and said 'We've got a million pounds, what do you want?'

Joe: Yeah (laughs)

Bob: You know? I mean that's – and then it's like 'well you can have this but you can't have that, do that but you can't do this, you can have so much say but oh no you can't do that', and there is a sense of philanthropy about it which I must admit

¹⁰ Joe's story, lines 32–39; see also appendix 4.

¹¹ From first coding frame, meaning the agenda of one person, group or organisation conflicts with another in a partnership context.

¹² From first coding frame, meaning a solution to a perceived problem imposed by a person, group or organisation outside the 'problem' situation.

¹³ From second coding frame: the feeling of wishing for or wanting something.

¹⁴ From second coding frame: the feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling.

I'm a little bit uncomfortable with, and you know ultimately is it the Government who are getting a kick out of this, like the millionaires that used to go in and put up dirty great big monolithic buildings in places and stick their name up and say 'oh aren't I wonderful'?¹⁵

This excerpt also demonstrates the familiar themes of **conflicting agendas**¹⁶ and **control**¹⁷. The conflicting agenda here is between the Sure Start manager as budget-holder who – in theory – can deploy that budget to meet the needs of the local community, and governmental restrictions on how the money can actually be spent. The Sure Start manager, in Bob's view, is required to control expenditure on behalf of the government, and is therefore an agent of their power-over. This makes him feel **uncomfortable**¹⁸.

Another paragraph from the Shire group's discussion is coded with **control**, but it incorporates very different feelings and issues from the first one discussed in this section above. Patrick's story is a satire on the process of partnership, with endless meetings and meaningless paper commitments. He characterises the Sure Start manager as a '*lonely wretch sitting at the bottom of the table*' with an '*ill-defined job description and ill-defined role*' who is '*of little significance to the story*'.¹⁹ During the discussion, Pam and Rebecca asked Patrick for clarification about the level of powerlessness of the lonely wretch. He replied:

No, I think the wretch will, can't walk away from this, that's what it is, that there is a danger that we'll get more and more sucked into a bigger and bigger and bigger initiative, that becomes more powerful, and more dominating than even the horrible baying crowd outside, which you'd rather face, you'd rather actually have the wrath of the crowd, almost, than lose control within that...²⁰

¹⁵ Discussion of Joe's story, lines 270–281.

¹⁶ From first coding frame, meaning the agenda of one person, group or organisation conflicts with another in a partnership context.

¹⁷ From first coding frame, meaning the text shows one person, group or organisation controlling another person, group or organisation.

¹⁸ Second coding frame: feeling physical or emotional discomfort.

¹⁹ Patrick's story, lines 21–28; see also appendix 4.

²⁰ Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 488–493.

It is interesting to see how **powerless**²¹ Sure Start managers appear to feel, despite each heading a positively publicised initiative employing around 40 staff with sizeable revenue and capital budgets. This issue was raised in discussion by all three groups, as were the related emotions of feeling in **danger**²² and under **threat**²³. Where Pam's comment on **control**²⁴ was coded with **frustration**²⁵, Patrick's was coded with **fear**²⁶ and **anger**²⁷: stronger, less professionally acceptable emotions that were explicitly discussed (fear by all three groups, anger by Shire and City) but not often or at length.

This excerpt also shows the extent to which the speaker identifies with his fictional character through an interesting switch from the initial third person discussion of 'the wretch' to the closer first person plural – '*there is a danger that we'll get more and more sucked into...*' – and then to the second person 'you' when he speaks of '*the horrible baying crowd outside, which you'd rather face, you'd rather actually have the wrath of the crowd, almost, than lose control within that...*' This switch appears to be unconscious. And the use of the word 'almost' may be telling here: it could mean that the Sure Start managing wretch feels as if he is stuck between the rock of the big powerful dominant initiative and the hard place of the horrible baying crowd, and therein lies his powerlessness.

Sure Start managers' feelings of powerlessness were covered in only three discussions – one from each of the three groups – but power as an issue was raised in all twelve discussions. The UK social policy partnership working literature seems to indicate that one intention of many area-based initiatives is to increase the power of people who have traditionally been less powerful, such as non-professional community members and the 'hard to reach'. As seen in the Introduction, analysis of Sure Start policy documents and media coverage suggests that Sure Start is one such initiative. However, the data suggests that

²¹ From first coding frame, meaning without power, lacking power.

²² Second coding frame: being or feeling at risk of something perilous.

²³ Second coding frame: an indication of impending danger; a feeling that such an indication exists.

²⁴ From first coding frame, meaning the text shows one person, group or organisation controlling another person, group or organisation.

²⁵ Second coding frame: the feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling.

²⁶ Second coding frame: to feel afraid or to express fear.

²⁷ Second coding frame: to feel or express anger.

this process seems to be fraught with difficulties. One of the themes in Amy's story was the power of communities, and its limits – and the limits of the Sure Start manager's power to change this. She spoke of a small group of people who decided to build a vehicle to take them to London to tell the decision-makers there about 'sproglets'. They built a fantastic vehicle, and were just getting the hang of driving it slowly down the motorway, when it crashed as a result of the speed of passing cars driven by impatient motorists, and they never got to London. The facilitator of the project, Mrs Grobbet (who in discussion was shown to be analogous to a Sure Start manager) was trying to exercise power-to and power-for, but was dramatically defeated. In discussion, Amy said that the basis of her story was *'when you empower people, how intolerable that can become, how frustrating to people who like to do things differently, faster, on other people's behalf'*.²⁸ Later in the discussion she linked this to the difficulties she and her staff experienced when empowering people, and Pam agreed:

Amy: I don't want to be doom-laden, but we know and are starting to experience this, this feeling that give people power, look what they ask for next, it's

Pam: Yeah, that's the challenging bit. Well, it's all challenging, but that's very challenging.

*Amy: And the fact - 'oy, hold it, stop, stop there, we want to do it our way'.*²⁹

Attempts to change the balance of power lead, perhaps inevitably, to power struggles, and these are hard to manage effectively. Later in the same discussion Patrick commented that *'I think that the depressing for me [sic] is that it probably is the reality that these communities are only allowed to go so far before some other greater force stamps on them'*³⁰. It seems particularly difficult for Sure Start managers, with all their genuine concern for the communities they serve, to recognise that they themselves may be, or at least may be instrumental agents for, that *'other greater force'* – like Cath's mysterious order-giver – which stamps on communities when they have gone too far. This links to the concern expressed by Bob above that communities can only be given a certain amount of power and

²⁸ Discussion of Amy's story, lines 171–173.

²⁹ Discussion of Amy's story, lines 358–365.

³⁰ Discussion of Amy's story, lines 408–410.

control, and it is the Sure Start manager's job to manage that by imposing and maintaining limits. As we have seen, Amy and Pam described this as **challenging**³¹, Patrick, **depressing**³²; and for Bob, it felt **uncomfortable**³³.

A power struggle was directly depicted in Bob's story, which was about shifts in power and the impact that those can have on communities. Two villages with separate mayors stood either side of a rickety old bridge, on which the son of one mayor and the daughter of the other became engaged. One mayor decided to celebrate this by rebuilding the bridge; the other decided to join in and it quickly became competitive; the project grew, with plans to build shops and entertainment venues on the bridge; as control of the project became more difficult a power struggle ensued. Then a stranger arrived, with more money to contribute; began by appearing to help, but eventually took over completely, and in the end villagers had to pay to use the bridge. As in the discussion of Pam's story (above), discussion of Bob's story revealed that the villagers were analogous to Sure Start communities. The mayors represented Sure Start managers, and the stranger represented the government introducing Children's Centres.

Although the form of power emphasised in the thematic interpretation was power-over, with a nod to power-to and power-for, a number of other types of power were revealed by the story interpretation and these will be discussed in the next chapter.

Management of Trust

During the discussion of his story, Bob identified lack of trust as a key factor in the partnership's inability to manage the power struggle effectively:

From one-to-one partnerships, partnerships at community level, the power of more people coming together is stronger, if you get trust, and if you take the trust away, if you don't even have trust, then to actually give it over to a big or corporate

³¹ From first coding frame, meaning that full use of abilities and resources are required in a demanding and stimulating situation.

³² Second coding frame: lowering spirits leading to sad, gloomy feelings.

³³ Second coding frame: feeling physical or emotional discomfort.

*enterprise, you get more out of it. Through negotiation of contract, the villagers got a percentage of the income etcetera, and they get the benefits of the bridge, they get discounts, but you could look at it all much, if people trusted each other, there's nothing wrong with actually what was going on.*³⁴

For Bob, it seems that trust is a kind of currency within communities, in some way equivalent to money in a hierarchical capitalist society.

Earlier in the discussion Cath had reflected the prevailing view in the academic literature when she said (of the mayors) *'they should have got that trust between them first of all, shouldn't they?'*³⁵. Later on, Bob identified the *'underlying assumption that we all trust each other'*³⁶. Later still, Sadie pointed out how fallacious such assumptions can be, Joe highlighted the potential fragility of trust, and Sadie spelled out the problems that can be caused when there is no basis of trust and a partnership takes an unexpected route.

Management of Complexity

The above excerpt also touches on the **complexity**³⁷ of partnership working, a topic that was discussed by all three groups. Patrick spoke of how an apparently straightforward partnership project can become *'enmeshed in lots of other complexities that take a lot of wrangling out'*³⁸. Pam pointed out that *'whenever something's being set up with public money, there's that balance to be struck between we have to be accountable and achieve certain targets and objectives and so on, but, we've also got to do this whole thing about respecting the particular cultures of families and communities that may not actually mesh'*³⁹.

The complexity of partnership working led Rebecca to tell an 'envelope' story, three separate stories within a surrounding story, because *'trying to think of a story about partnerships, there were so many different ways and perspectives, I didn't*

³⁴ Discussion of Bob's story, lines 376–383.

³⁵ Discussion of Bob's story, lines 268–269.

³⁶ Discussion of Bob's story, line 408.

³⁷ Second coding frame: a sense or experience of convoluted intricacy.

³⁸ Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 134–135.

³⁹ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 456–460.

*feel I could tell one story*⁴⁰. Simon explained how complexity can contribute to communication problems both outside the programme when *'other managers don't quite understand the complexities or the priorities or the work that we have to do as a Sure Start programme*⁴¹, and inside the programme, as when he discovered that a member of staff, after 18 months in post, still did not understand the programme's targets towards which everyone was supposed to be working together⁴².

It appears that communication and its management may also be particularly complex in partnership settings. This will be discussed further below.

Management of Communication

Communication⁴³ is another theme that was discussed by all three groups. It was a central theme in Sadie's story, a science fiction tale of people who live in total isolation and can communicate only through computers – and the computers even control the nature of that communication by removing all the emotion from it:

*There's a chap, a man called Peter 265, and he's just getting terribly frustrated at the moment and he's screaming at this plasma screen: 'You've got to be joking, I can't believe you're bloody going to do this again to us,' sharing all his frustrations with the computer, but knowing full well that his friend, George 148 at the other end, is not actually going to hear this, because the problem is these computers change the words that he's saying, so when Peter's swearing and cursing and shouting, actually what George at the other end of the computer hears is purely 'I don't feel at this time we can change the system'.*⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Discussion of Rebecca's story, lines 169–171.

⁴¹ Simon's story, lines 83–85; see also appendix 4.

⁴² Simon's story, lines 56–63; see also appendix 4.

⁴³ From first coding frame, meaning the exchange of e.g. information, thoughts or feelings via e.g. writing, speech or behaviour.

⁴⁴ Sadie's story, lines 19–27; see also appendix 4.

It is interesting that the emotion being expressed is **frustration**⁴⁵, one of the emotions most commonly expressed by participants in this research, and again the frustration is linked with feeling **powerless**⁴⁶. In Sadie's story this is taken to an extreme as the characters are even powerless to communicate clearly. This extract also links with the minor theme of **language**⁴⁷, discussed by both the Shire and Borders groups, and in particular the difference between personal language including emotional expression and unemotional professional language (this is discussed in more detail below). But in the City group's perception, there are even more intractable obstacles to communication than the differences between languages, such as **technology**⁴⁸.

Sadie: I think as well now we've moved that way with emails and text messages, because you kind of lose all elements of sarcasm, and actually people sometimes, I know I've sent texts that are meant to be sarcastic and people have seen it as an insult, because actually they thought I was being serious all the way around, but already, like you said, on the Internet there's no emotion in communication.

*Joe: It's a bit of an anonymity with emails as well, isn't there? The power, I guess, with such efficient communication processes now, there's so much information, and yet we're not better informed, you look at what we're trying to do through Sure Start and it's almost as though we're trying to build in information, knowledge and intuitive things which were once there around healthy eating, parenting, and all the rest of it, that's been lost, possibly because of the stripping out of the human communication part of life.*⁴⁹

This excerpt demonstrates that Sadie and Joe, like Peter 265 and George 148, feel to some extent **powerless**⁵⁰ to communicate clearly through the technology that they have to use. Joe takes the analogy further than Sadie, suggesting that it is not just emotion that is lost in the technological age, but also '*knowledge and intuitive things which were once there*', and he sees Sure Start as a tool for

⁴⁵ Second coding frame: the feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling.

⁴⁶ First coding frame, meaning without power, lacking power.

⁴⁷ First coding frame, meaning communication of thoughts, feelings and perceptions, using sounds, e.g. speech, or symbols, e.g. writing.

⁴⁸ First coding frame, meaning electronic or digital products and systems.

⁴⁹ Discussion of Sadie's story, lines 348–361.

⁵⁰ First coding frame, meaning without power, lacking power.

replacing and preserving these. His statement also incorporates a feeling of **nostalgia**⁵¹ for an earlier time when the '*knowledge and intuitive things*' were readily available to people.

The importance of managing differences in **perception**⁵², and the complexity of the resulting tensions, was discussed by each group in a variety of contexts. Cath's story exemplified this. It was about a group of small animals in a forest glade, led by Mother Rabbit, who were under threat from a group of ponies from a nearby forest who had been told by a mysterious higher-up being that they must colonise the glade. It could be argued that the entire story is about Mother Rabbit's attempts to manage the different viewpoints: the view of the mysterious giver of orders that the ponies' forest must be cleared; the resulting view of the ponies that they must take over the small animals' glade; and the view of the small animals that they were therefore in danger and needed to find a way to preserve their lives and societies.

*... the leader of these ponies, a little bit like the New Forest ponies, said that they'd been given orders to clear their forest and because it was going to be taken over, they didn't know by who, or what, but orders had come from on high that they'd got to clear this forest and find another place to live, so they wanted to turn these out of this glade, you see, and take over. And they came in, and Mother Rabbit tried to speak to them and tell them that this glade, they were willing to share this glade, but they were such big animals, if they just came in all they would do, they would trample it all down, and all the extended families, and everything they'd got down there, and they'd all lived so happily together, they would just be crushed, and there would be no way of getting them back into that family.*⁵³

Interestingly, this story excerpt contains many of the subjects covered in the discussions outlined above: control; imposed solutions; social engineering; danger; threat; powerlessness; fear; conflicting agendas; frustration. Several other minor themes are also included: **leadership**⁵⁴, through the ponies' leader and

⁵¹ Second coding frame: longing for something remembered.

⁵² First coding frame, meaning how something is viewed by an individual, group or organisation.

⁵³ Cath's story, lines 50–60; see also appendix 4.

⁵⁴ First coding frame, meaning the activity of leading, or the ability to lead.

Mother Rabbit; **emergency**⁵⁵, which Sure Start managers spoke about having to deal with regularly; **hierarchy**⁵⁶, with the mysterious order-giver at the top, then the ponies, then Mother Rabbit, then all the little animals in the glade; and a **feeling of space and distance**⁵⁷ between different groups. It is also interesting that there is no direct contact between characters more than one level apart in the hierarchy: Mother Rabbit manages to speak to the ponies, but the ponies do not speak to the smaller animals, and Mother Rabbit cannot speak to the order-giver because nobody knows who that is. In the context of Sure Start, this represents the impersonal Whitehall decision-makers who also appear in several other stories, e.g. as the king and his ministers in Pam's story (Shire group), the all-powerful computers in Sadie's story (City group), and the very special visitor in Elaine's story (Borders group).

Communicating within partnerships is clearly a complex matter. Individual communication about emotions within the MSM, examined closely, is also more complex than it might appear at first. We have already seen that Patrick demonstrated identification with his fictional character through an apparently unconscious slip from the third person into the first person plural and then into the second person (see above). Other participants also made similar slips. For example, Cath first demonstrates identification with hers through a quick and apparently unconscious slip into the first person plural. (It could be argued that these slips might have been deliberate, but because of the way they sound in the recording and are framed in the text, they appear to be unconscious.) The City group had huge sympathy for Mother Rabbit's plight from the very beginning of their discussion:

Helen: So, initial reactions?

Joe: I'd like to help Mother Rabbit.

(laughter)

⁵⁵ First coding frame, meaning an unexpected situation requiring urgent action.

⁵⁶ First coding frame, meaning a perceived or actual grading of organisations, departments, groups and/or individuals according to status.

⁵⁷ Second coding frame: a feeling of being apart or remote from another individual, group or organisation in any context (geographical, status-based, wealth-based, etc).

*Joe: And come with her to see the king.*⁵⁸

But up to the start of the excerpt below, which comes about one-third of the way through the discussion, the story had been talked about entirely in the third person (following my instructions as described in chapter 4 and appendix 3). Cath's slip into the first person plural is underlined:

Joe: Seems to me like the king, or whoever the powerful person is, has decided 'oh my people like glades, we'll have a glade expansion programme, we'll have glades everywhere, and very quickly, who can do this quickly, right, the horses can do it quickly, and they're very fast, and big animals'. "Horses? We'll have glades everywhere. See to it." And that's about it. Without realising that actually you need rabbits and little animals to get a good glade.

Cath: Yeah, to sustain it, to keep it going.

Joe: Yeah.

Cath: Because if we don't meet the needs of those little animals, and little things, they'll go, they'll disappear, won't they?

Joe: Mmm.

Cath: Off to Wetherspoons!

(laughter)

Joe: We're mixing our stories now!

*Cath: But they will, won't they? They'll disappear if their needs can't be met in that glade ...*⁵⁹

So the discussion went back into the third person for a few minutes, and then slipped in and out of the first person for a short time, as the group seemed to identify ever more closely with Mother Rabbit and apparently began to use the ponies more and more to symbolise their own management, eventually naming two of their senior managers, Jocasta and Robyn, in the process:

Cath: But some glades need more nurturing and bringing on, than others, so they will need more input into that. we don't want to see all our glades the same, but we

⁵⁸ Discussion of Cath's story, lines 87–91.

⁵⁹ Discussion of Cath's story, lines 256–279.

want all our glades supported by the ponies. I mean we might find that the ponies as well find that they feel more comfortable in different glades. so they wouldn't have to be a great big herd of ponies, they could spread themselves out, couldn't they

Joe: Interesting

Cath: Into all the glades that are around there, because whatever's in those glades might suit their needs better. Do you think you'd agree to that?

Joe: I would, yeah. It's safer to be in the herd, though, and so maybe we need to invite some ponies to come along on their own. It's the herd that's scary, isn't it. you know, perhaps we could take some of our, the ponies and let them graze a little here and there.

Cath: Mmm. Do you mean like shadow?

Joe: Mmm.

Cath: One of them could shadow us?

Joe: Well, you know, I think it would be a really good thing for Jocasta, Robyn and some others to spend a day with you, Cath, and a day with me, we could see a bit of interesting grazing happening, probably...

(laughter)⁶⁰

The first of the two excerpts above, like that from the discussion of Patrick's story by the Shire group, appears to show the anxiety of a Sure Start manager caught between the rock of a powerfully imposed directive and the hard place of a community whose needs are not being met, and trying to manage the apparently irreconcilable differences between the **conflicting agendas**⁶¹ of the two groups. Joe, in his initial statement in that excerpt, evidently perceives the themes of **imposed solutions**⁶² and **conflicting agendas**. His statement seems to trigger anxiety in Cath, who demonstrates the concern for the '*rabbits and little animals*' in the glade – her metaphor for the community in a Sure Start area – that is common to all participants. Anxiety will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

⁶⁰ Discussion of Cath's story, lines 390–417.

⁶¹ First coding frame, meaning where the agenda of one person, group or organisation conflicts with another in a partnership context.

⁶² First coding frame, meaning solution to a perceived problem imposed by a person, group or organisation outside the 'problem' situation.

Management of Identity

As with trust, the data says much less about the management of **identity**⁶³ than the literature led me to expect. Identity itself was only mentioned three times, by the Borders group: twice by Fred in his initial story, in which King Kong assumes a new identity, and once by Elaine in discussion of Luke's story, where she spoke of a '*team identity*'⁶⁴. On closer examination of the data, a long section of the discussion (lines 419–488), which included this phrase, was coded with identity – but this was the only section of the data where the subject was discussed.

That entire section of data is reproduced in chapter 6, as it forms a particular type of story in itself, so a summary of the relevant parts will be given here. Luke began by speaking of his team of around 40 staff, spread over a wide geographical area, and how hard he had to work to '*keep all those people feeling part of it*'⁶⁵ [i.e. Sure Start] and not part of the local authority. Although he is speaking of his team as a whole, he seems also to be focusing at the level of individual identity, because of his view that each person has to feel '*part of it*'. Simon then changes the focus to partnership identity, saying he has '*done everything to push for the whole team to be seen as the local authority*'⁶⁶ – so focusing on the way his Sure Start partnership looks to outsiders – although he acknowledges that he's had '*some senior workers as well as the front-line staff who perhaps haven't shared that same wish and desire to be part of the local authority*'⁶⁷. Luke and Simon then discuss the pros and cons of having access to both Sure Start and local authority identities, and the way that they can, to some extent, pick and choose between them. Elaine joins in at this point and broadens the discussion again to include team identity. She says that her team also feel that, to some extent, they can pick and choose between Sure Start and the local authority. She and Luke conclude

⁶³ Second coding frame: a separate or distinct existence.

⁶⁴ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 481–482.

⁶⁵ Discussion of Luke's story, line 419.

⁶⁶ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 425–426.

⁶⁷ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 436–438.

Anne: But it is a funny hybrid world that you're in, because you have to spend a lot of time developing the Sure Start brand, and having a sense of team identity around that as well as

Luke: Yeah, definitely.

Anne: The other.

*Luke: Therein lies the challenge.*⁶⁸

Luke's beginning showed his feelings of **responsibility**⁶⁹ for fostering cohesion among his staff. Simon's reply suggested that he would feel **isolated**⁷⁰ and in **danger**⁷¹ if he separated his staff from the local authority, and spoke of his **frustration**⁷² at having staff who felt differently from him. He indicated that he and his staff sometimes felt **supported**⁷³, sometimes **unsupported**⁷⁴, and sometimes **constrained**⁷⁵ by the local authority. Elaine said that she and her staff also sometimes felt **supported** and sometimes **constrained** by their local authority. And Luke concluded that the management of a hybrid identity was **challenging**⁷⁶.

Management of Conflicting Agendas

Conflicting agendas⁷⁷, and the implications for managing these, were discussed at length by each group. Pam, in discussion of the analogy she had drawn in her own story, illustrated how the national 'top-down' approach to **social engineering**⁷⁸, through **imposed solutions**⁷⁹, conflicts with the local partnership working agenda. The local agenda is in theory collaborative but the result of the directives from above was that this became only superficial: *'You know, the*

⁶⁸ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 480–488.

⁶⁹ Second coding frame: the feeling of being responsible.

⁷⁰ Second coding frame: feeling set apart from others.

⁷¹ Second coding frame: being or feeling at risk from something perilous.

⁷² Second coding frame: the feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling.

⁷³ Second coding frame: feeling helped, maintained and strengthened.

⁷⁴ Second coding frame: feeling a lack of help or succour.

⁷⁵ Second coding frame: feeling inhibited or confined by an external force.

⁷⁶ First coding frame. meaning requiring full use of abilities and resources in a demanding and stimulating situation.

⁷⁷ First coding frame, meaning where the agenda of one person, group or organisation conflicts with another in a partnership context.

⁷⁸ First coding frame, meaning a process by which the Government uses its power to try to change aspects of society.

⁷⁹ First coding frame, meaning a solution to a perceived problem imposed by a person, group or organisation outside the 'problem' situation

*analogy with it's your top 20% ward therefore go and do something to it and in it because otherwise, and we'll say we're all working together but actually we have our agenda and you've got to achieve it.*⁸⁰ Once again, the Sure Start manager was rendered **powerless**⁸¹.

Bob spoke of his perception that idealistic social reform agendas conflict with harsh financial reality: '*...the vision actually gets a bit put to one side in our rather hard commercial world today, of is that going to survive, is it going to make money, therefore let's find that vision but let's just put that on one side while we see whether it's actually going to make it, survive in its own right.*'⁸² It seems that for Bob, the ideals and the reality cannot be reconciled; they will be forever separate, distanced. Space, distance and separation are related themes that recur throughout the discussions of all three groups, expressed as a **feeling of space and distance**⁸³, and are reviewed in more detail below.

Conflicting agendas also played a large part in Luke's story. He took the theme of crisis management, and his story was a series of mini-stories about emergencies experienced by a Sure Start manager. Conflicting agendas were demonstrated by the Borders group in the discussion of one such **emergency**⁸⁴, when the Children's Minister was visiting a Sure Start local programme:

Luke: As these things always happen, she was 45 minutes late, the children were fractious and all the rest of it, and this led to a mum absolutely losing it, and she turned out in good faith to help us and support us and all the rest of it, but at the time it was like 'I'm sorry you're upset, over there, have a glass of water', lock the room

(laughter)

Simon: Absolutely, soundproof it

(laughter)

⁸⁰ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 792–794.

⁸¹ First coding frame, meaning without power, lacking power.

⁸² Discussion of Joe's story, lines 106–109.

⁸³ Second coding frame: a feeling of being apart or remote from another individual, group or organisation in any context (geographical, status-based, wealth-based, etc).

⁸⁴ First coding frame, meaning an unexpected situation requiring urgent action.

*Luke: and get the bloody dignitary out, and then you could get back to...*⁸⁵

This data excerpt again shows a Sure Start manager 'caught in the middle' between his need to manage the emotions of fractious children and an upset mother, and his need to manage the official visit. Luke's demotion of the Children's Minister to '*the bloody dignitary*' who is to be got out so that he could get back to – well, he does not specify, but he has said enough to let us infer that he may want to get back to the upset mother, or to get back to his real job, or to get back to normal. He has to prioritise the professional agenda of managing the dignitary's visit while she is on the premises, but his personal priority is to manage the upset mother and the fractious children. Luke is caricaturing the situation to make it a more entertaining story, and the laughter of the other participants and Simon's supportive interjection suggest that they are in accord with his views and priorities.

Management of Tensions

The excerpt above seems to show a tension between overall event management and individual relationship management. It was coded with **concealment**⁸⁶ because of the expressed wish to hide the upset mum. The laughter indicates that Luke and Simon are caricaturing their own responses – they would not, in reality, put a distressed person (or anyone else) in a locked soundproofed room – but through this amusement we can see their shared desire to be able to focus on one thing at a time in stressful situations, to deal with the '*dignitary*' first and then look after the upset parent. This prioritisation is difficult for them: their instinct would be to look after the upset parent first, but the visitor is deemed to take priority. This is because they see their role in the visit as, in effect, to put on a **performance**⁸⁷ for the Children's Minister and her entourage which, if it goes well, may lead to wider positive consequences for the programme as a whole and therefore for individual community members. (Performance management is discussed in more detail below.) Local people may not share this view, and may not agree with the

⁸⁵ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 285–297.

⁸⁶ First coding frame, meaning to hide from view, observation or discovery.

⁸⁷ First coding frame, meaning the act of performing before an audience.

managers' prioritisation. Simon summed up the difficulty in managing conflicting agendas in partnership working when he said '*actually negotiating, engaging, and setting up one agenda can sometimes be very difficult*'.⁸⁸ There is awareness of this in Luke and Simon's exchange above, where the conflicting agendas cause the inevitable **frustration**⁸⁹, as shown by Luke's impatience to '*get the bloody dignitary out*' and get back to working with the local people.

The theme of concealment arose in seven discussions, three from the Shire group and all four from the Borders group. The Borders group gave the clearest example of a feeling expressed by all the groups: that Sure Start managers are in touch with '*the real agenda*' through their contact with local communities:

Elaine: ... people lose touch with the real agenda, and you can just see that with your colleagues, and I think the joyous thing about our job is that we just don't have the privilege of losing touch with

Simon: No, absolutely, because you have a rude awakening

Elaine: Yeah.

Simon: when you go up to the parents' room and say 'how are you?' and it's not like that at all

Elaine: Absolutely. Yeah. 'What are you talking about?' Yeah. 'What are you talking about? What did you mean then?'

*Simon: Yeah.*⁹⁰

Elaine and Simon evidently value this experience, which Elaine describes as 'joyous'. **Joy**⁹¹ is one of the strongest positive emotional expressions in the data but is very rarely used: three times in total (twice by Elaine and once by Sadie), and only here as unequivocally positive in the present tense. Elaine and Simon seem to be creating and sharing meaning here: they reflect each other's use of language ('*absolutely*', '*yeah*') and finish each other's sentences, which may

⁸⁸ Simon's story, lines 47–48; see also appendix 4.

⁸⁹ Second coding frame: the feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling.

⁹⁰ Discussion of Elaine's story, lines 554–568.

⁹¹ Second coding frame: intense happiness: great pleasure.

indicate that they feel as if they are talking about the same thing. The apparent creation and sharing of meaning will be discussed in more detail below.

The excerpt above is also coded with the interesting minor theme of **a feeling of space and distance**⁹², which arose in eleven of the twelve discussions (the exception being the City group's discussion of Joe's story about capital build). Sure Start managers have to manage the tensions between national decision-makers and local implementers of those decisions; between strategic and operational staff; between strategic staff and local communities; between national decision-makers and local communities (*'their lives are being controlled by people who know nothing about them'*⁹³ said Patrick); between politicians (national or local) and operational staff; between politicians (national or local) and local communities; between Sure Start managers and children (who were mentioned in only seven of the twelve discussions); between partnership professionals and local communities; between workers creating wealth and people who make money; between performer and audience; and even between neighbouring local communities. **Concealment**⁹⁴, and the theme of performance management (see below), seem to play a crucial role in managing these tensions.

Performance Management

The performance/audience theme was prominent in seven discussions, three from the Shire group and all four from the Borders group. Three of the stories had explicit elements of performance/audience: Pam's story, and Simon's, both used the circus as a central metaphor, and Rebecca's story was about performance storytellers. A fourth story, Fred's sequel to King Kong, had implicit elements of performance/audience. In discussion of Luke's story about crisis management, Elaine spells out one performance aspect of the Sure Start manager's role:

... you're not really allowed to bring the crisis bits to the table really when you're out doing any strategic developments, but people want this happy shiny person,

⁹² Second coding frame: a feeling of being apart or remote from another individual, group or organisation in any context (geographical, status-based, wealth-based etc).

⁹³ Discussion of Amy's story, lines 596–597.

⁹⁴ First coding frame, meaning to hide from view, observation or discovery.

*and Simon's perhaps [sic] that we make it look too easy because we have these different personas, so when we go out we become very good at being the giving out person, the person who gives presentations, who makes it all sound very exciting, and probably quite simple to actually get to this point, but back in your own domestic world you've got these crises happening ...*⁹⁵

This is a clear depiction of emotional labour as originally defined by Hochschild (1983) where employed people have to smile and project a positive personality regardless of how they really feel. However, it goes further, because it also connects with one of the most interesting findings of this research: that of the emotional range required by people working as Sure Start managers. The Shire and Borders groups discussed this at length, and it was also touched on by the City group. Pam spoke eloquently about the subject:

*Even if the poor wretch is feeling completely and utterly wretched, he still has to go and talk to the crowd, and talk it up, and be pleasant, and be very positive, and move things, try and move things forward that way, and then go back to the professional group and suddenly become the professional person that uses all the jargon, because otherwise there's no respect there, and yet it's like switching between registers the whole time.*⁹⁶

It appears that to Pam, the entire role is a performance. Luke also made the link between emotional labour and diversity of **language**⁹⁷:

Luke: Sometimes people have a real go at you because they're feeling very insecure and uncomfortable about a bulge somewhere else in the system, and again it's that literacy thing, it's having to be, speak voluntary services, speak PCT⁹⁸, speak local authority, speak social services, speak you name it,
Fred: absolutely, yeah

⁹⁵ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 205–212.

⁹⁶ Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 452–458.

⁹⁷ First coding frame, meaning communication of thoughts, feelings and perceptions, using sounds (e.g. speech) or symbols (e.g. writing).

⁹⁸ Primary Care Trust

*Luke: you have to have that range of, you need at least a sprinkling of, enough to order a sandwich and a beer basically, enough to get through to be able to get yourself to the table for people just not to be absolutely foul to you, sometimes, and sometimes people are absolutely foul to you, and you have to take it on the chin and go away, and then next time you go back something's changed, they've moved on a bit.*⁹⁹

As shown in chapter 3, language has a key role in articulating emotion. As demonstrated by the initial data collection using traditional methods (chapter 4), professional languages such as 'PCT', 'local authority' and 'social services' have little or no emotional vocabulary. In her story, Sadie spoke eloquently of '*the stripping out of the human communication part of life*'¹⁰⁰. This lack of a professional emotional vocabulary contributes to the difficulties in self-management outlined by Fred and Elaine:

Fred: We need to in a sense desensitise ourselves in order to function, so it's hard to have a vision of what it would be like in a humane, thoroughly child-centred way. Doesn't mean we can't talk about it and try, but

*Elaine: We also have to learn and adapt, don't we, in order to attend the meetings we have to attend, we have to learn and acquire those management skills and that way of behaving and interacting in order to stay up with that way of operating, and there are losses and gains with that certainly.*¹⁰¹

Pam expressed the emotional range in personal terms:

Pam: Actually it's part of this job, you can be up there, and you can be down there two minutes later, or half... and then suddenly you're sort of swinging between the two poles like nobody's business, and it's, because it can be, it can feel fantastic,

Rebecca: Yes

*Pam: but it can also feel very depressing, so ...*¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 536–549.

¹⁰⁰ Sadie's story, line 361; see also appendix 4.

¹⁰¹ Discussion of Fred's story, lines 285–293.

¹⁰² Discussion of Pam's story, lines 276–283.

Luke identified the reason for this when he said *'I think it's because we have to work on so many levels, there is that strategic level, there's effective thinking, then there's the coat hangers, and then there's all the stations in between, and it's such a huge spectrum, such a huge range of knowledge and skill you have to have, emotional literacy as well, to attempt to read all those things... and there is that emotional pull at absolutely every single level'*.¹⁰³ Sure Start managers have to be ready to deal with everyone from the Children's Minister to a sick baby, from the Director of Children's Services to a pregnant teenager who is due in court, from the Chair of their local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to a single dad struggling with bereavement and young children – sometimes all in one day. Elaine spoke of *'this huge emotional resource that you have to develop as a programme manager'*.¹⁰⁴ Pam spoke of *'having to switch between the registers all the time'*.¹⁰⁵

Sitting in the middle as they do, Sure Start managers seem unclear whether they're operational or strategic staff. The Borders group discussed this at some length. Here is one illustrative example:

Simon: Fred and I spoke about this last week, saying that we're either very highly paid project workers or we end up poorly paid strategic managers

Elaine: Yes, yes

Simon: and I think it's not about salaries

Elaine: Yes

Simon: but it's about where you fit within the hierarchy

Elaine: Yes

*Simon: and the organisation, and I think you can draw whatever conclusion you want, I know from having seen different things operating in conversations I've had that we are quite highly paid project workers.*¹⁰⁶

As Simon makes clear, he has his reasons for reaching that conclusion. From the data in this research, it seems that Sure Start managers are both strategic and

¹⁰³ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 297 to 302 and 333.

¹⁰⁴ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 200–201.

¹⁰⁵ Discussion of Rebecca's story, lines 691–692.

¹⁰⁶ Discussion of Simon's story, lines 471–486.

operational, depending on the point from which they are viewed. To their staff and the local communities, who are below them in hierarchical terms, they are strategic; to their management and politicians, who are above them in the hierarchy¹⁰⁷, they are operational. This, as Luke realised, is part of the reason they need such a wide assortment of available emotional responses.

Sure Start Managers' Emotions – Sharing and Creating Meaning

The '*huge emotional resource*' mentioned by Elaine is evident in the 107 feelings and emotions identified by research participants (see appendix 8 for the full list). The emotion most commonly mentioned as experienced in the context of Sure Start management was **desire**¹⁰⁸, closely followed by **isolation**¹⁰⁹ and **frustration**¹¹⁰.

For most of each session participants were listening respectfully to each other's contributions and displaying normal conversational 'turn-taking' (Schegloff and Sacks 1974:236), with pauses at times. But now and again a pair, a trio, or the group as a whole would become animated and have a series of quick exchanges where meaning appears to be being shared and created, as in the discussions between Elaine and Simon, above, about the position of Sure Start managers. For example, the Borders group, discussing Fred's story, moved to the subject of increased political manoeuvring caused by the rapid pace of change in children's services:

Elaine: What I feel is that with Sure Start we had that idealism, and that now perhaps we are feeling, more where we are than perhaps where you are, a loss of that, and back to that politicking and positioning, with very little focus on the children. When we can see in our own programmes the impact that our interventions have made on family lives

Luke: Absolutely

¹⁰⁷ First coding frame, meaning a perceived or actual grading of organisations, departments, groups and or individuals according to status.

¹⁰⁸ Second coding frame: wishing for or wanting something.

¹⁰⁹ Second coding frame: being or feeling set apart from others.

¹¹⁰ Second coding frame: the feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling.

Fred: Yes

Elaine: Where you've got lots of anecdotal evidence and personal experiences.

Fred: Yes. There are some meetings that you could go to and you could do a tape of an entire meeting and then do the transcript and where the word 'children' occurs you could get your eraser and take that out and put in 'supermarket'

Simon: Yes!

Fred: or 'market competitiveness' concepts or whatever

Elaine: Yeah, new brand of butter

Fred: Yeah, new brand

Simon: Yeah, low fat

Fred: And there would be no differences, actually, between the approaches, and nothing would indicate that you were trying to operate from a humane perspective, let alone a child-centred one.

*Elaine, Luke, Simon: Mmm.*¹¹¹

As well as apparently creating and sharing meaning about the way in which Sure Start is changing, this excerpt also covers **nostalgia**¹¹² ('we had that idealism, and...now perhaps we are feeling... a loss of that'), **frustration**¹¹³ ('back to that politicking and positioning'), and the unemotional nature of professional **language**¹¹⁴.

The Shire group, discussing Patrick's story, also appeared to demonstrate the creation and sharing of meaning, focusing more closely on the feelings of the Sure Start manager:

Patrick: I think the poor wretch started off probably quite enthusiastic, but after six months became more realistic and then quite

Pam: ground down, careworn

Patrick: despondent

Rebecca: tired

¹¹¹ Discussion of Fred's story, lines 249–280.

¹¹² Second coding frame: longing for something remembered.

¹¹³ Second coding frame: the feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling.

¹¹⁴ First coding frame, meaning communication of thoughts, feelings and perceptions, using sounds (e.g. speech) or symbols (e.g. writing).

Patrick: and quite fearful

Amy: stressed

*Patrick: and I think needs to almost take a complete U-turn and get back to where they were at the beginning and whether or not that's possible I don't know for the wretch.*¹¹⁵

This may show how the initial idealism can be lost in personal as well as global terms, and how this too can lead to **nostalgia**¹¹⁶. It also shows how the future is experienced with a feeling of **uncertainty**¹¹⁷, a theme discussed at length by all three groups.

Another example of apparent creating and sharing of meaning comes from the Borders group who, after Elaine had told her story, were discussing the difficulties caused by senior politicians visiting local programmes and publicly instructing managers to do things they actually did not have the resources for, such as providing free driving lessons for community members or including people from beyond the designated area:

*Simon: And then it got to the end and one of them said to Naomi*¹¹⁸ *'but you see it is still frustrating that some people can come along to all these services and others can't', and Naomi in front of all those, with health visitors, with the Health Improvement Manager for the PCT*¹¹⁹, *with a number of other people, said 'but that doesn't apply, anybody can come along now to Sure Start services'. I'm like Cut It Now.*

Luke: Okay, let's moooooooooove on!

Simon: And I was like 'well yeah that's the intention, that's the vision, but at the moment in our town that isn't the reality'.

Luke: Yes.

Simon: But that was hard, because you've got, like you said,

¹¹⁵ Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 548–563.

¹¹⁶ Second coding frame: longing for something remembered.

¹¹⁷ Second coding frame: unsure of something.

¹¹⁸ Naomi Eisenstadt, Director of the Sure Start Unit

¹¹⁹ Primary Care Trust

Elaine: Yeah

Simon: get them driving lessons, anyone can come to Sure Start, and you just think 'shit'.

Elaine: Yeah.

Fred: Your boss says.

Simon: Yeah, That's the willingness, isn't it, the sheer enthusiasm.

Elaine: Especially if you've built it up beforehand.

Simon: The week before.

Elaine: You've built her up, you say 'she's very accessible', but the whole Sure Start Unit, mmm

Simon: Yeah yeah yeah. Amazing. Amazing.¹²⁰

Here we see two common themes in different guises. **Frustration**¹²¹, this time, is expressed by a member of the local community. The managers need to set limits, but it is the **imposed solutions**¹²² from the senior civil servant that they need to limit rather than the wishes of the local community, and that tension is clearly very difficult to manage. Also, the senior civil servant from the Sure Start Unit is performing her own role, part of which is to maintain the image of the government, at the expense of the Sure Start managers, who will be left to manage the tension she has created for them. Interestingly, this excerpt links back to the theme of power, discussed first in this chapter: the senior civil servant is effectively exercising her 'power-over' the Sure Start manager. But the manager does not yet have enough staff to deliver, or systems in place to monitor, services to people from outside their original catchment area; nor is there any spare money in the budget to fund expensive driving lessons for community members.

It seems that during some parts of the group discussions, meaning is made and shared. Our language currently has no word for how this feels, although I believe that many people will have experienced the sense of making and sharing meaning with others through discussion: there is a feeling of recognition and mutual

¹²⁰ Discussion of Elaine's story, lines 423–457.

¹²¹ Second coding frame: the feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling.

¹²² First coding frame, meaning solution to a perceived problem imposed by a person, group or organisation outside the 'problem' situation.

understanding, even though the understanding may in fact be different in each person's mind. I have tentatively named this feeling **consense**¹²³, a word that stands at the third point of a triangle with 'sense' and 'nonsense', and is etymologically linked to 'consensual'.

This process can be seen at work in the following extract from the discussion of Cath's story:

Bob: I think ponies like power. And the herd mentality, you're right, they herd.

Joe: The herd is safe, yeah.

Cath: Yeah.

Bob: It's safer.

Joe: It is actually hard to talk to a single pony, isn't it?

Cath: It is.

Bob: Because they can't relate without knowing what the rest are doing.

Joe: And ponies feel a little bit awkward about speaking for the herd. Yeah.

Cath: The leader always speaks for, well the leader tells them that, that big pony has control of that herd.

Bob: And I think there's an underlying assumption that all glades are not necessarily working well.

Joe: Yeah.

Bob: But it's just an assumption, because they're told by somebody that.

Joe: What, throughout the country, would you say?

Bob: [nods]

Joe: Yeah.

*Bob: Areas of deprivation.*¹²⁴

This excerpt covers many of the common issues: **power**¹²⁵, **leadership**¹²⁶, **communication**¹²⁷, **control**¹²⁸, and a **feeling of space and distance**¹²⁹. But

¹²³ Second coding frame: a feeling between two or more people of recognition and mutual understanding.

¹²⁴ Discussion of Cath's story, lines 421–453.

¹²⁵ First coding frame, meaning the ability to exercise control, strength or force.

¹²⁶ First coding frame, meaning the activity of leading, or the ability to lead.

¹²⁷ First coding frame, meaning the exchange of e.g. information, thoughts or feelings via e.g. writing, speech or behaviour.

Bob, Joe and Cath (the whole group, as Sadie was absent from the discussion at this point) do not seem to be simply talking about these things, they appear to be creating and sharing meaning, and in the process they are building a picture, using Cath's images of the herd of ponies and the forest glade, of a structure of hierarchy and power and control that limits communication and separates people from each other – the hierarchy with a pecking order referred to earlier in this chapter.

Conclusion

The first five themes used in this interpretation, i.e. power, trust, complexity, communication and identity, were drawn from the partnership literature (chapter 2), while the last three, i.e. performance, tensions, and conflicting agendas, were drawn from the emotion literature (chapter 3). However, closer examination of both bodies of literature show that the 'partnership' themes are also themes in the emotion literature, and two of the three 'emotion' themes are also themes in the partnership literature. The exception is the theme of performance, which does not appear to feature in the partnership literature – at least, not in the sense in which it is used here, i.e. performance as an individual method of managing choices about showing and hiding emotions in the workplace. The demonstration that each theme may be linked with specific emotional responses opens up a potentially interesting avenue for exploration in the context of the partnership literature.

The finding that people working as Sure Start managers need a wide emotional range to draw on to create convincing emotional performances enriches the conceptualisation of emotional labour found in the emotion literature. Also, the relationship between emotion, professional language and personal language highlighted in this chapter adds another dimension to the account of the relationship between language and emotion found in the emotion literature.

¹²⁸ First coding frame, meaning text shows one person, group or organisation controlling another person, group or organisation.

¹²⁹ Second coding frame: a feeling of being apart or remote from another individual, group or organisation in any context (geographical, status-based, wealth-based etc).

This thematic interpretation of the data has revealed that participants' stories and discussions illustrate many of the themes found in the partnership and emotion literature. These themes include power, trust, complexity, communication, identity, performance, tensions, and conflicting agendas – all of which have to be managed by any Sure Start manager. Furthermore, the thematic interpretation showed participants creating and sharing meaning. The story interpretation, in the next chapter, will explore these issues in more depth.

Chapter Six – Story Interpretation

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline and review some of the meanings offered by, and some of the functions of, the stories told within the MSM. This includes stories identified in the discussions, as well as the initial ‘springboard’ stories told by participants. The interpretation primarily focuses on meanings related to partnership working and emotion. The chapter also reviews the participants’ discussions of the meanings and functions of stories. As discussed in chapter 4, ‘story’ here means a social actor’s rendition of a story that is not necessarily ‘true’ in a factual sense. It could be argued that some elements of the stories told do appear to be ‘true’, as some of them include details of actual events, but the way in which these events are recounted renders them if not entirely fictional then at least fictionalised.

As the data was coded and this thesis written, I was constantly interpreting the words of participants and creating meanings from the text and my knowledge of the context. This is not an attempt to offer an exhaustive or conclusive interpretation, as more meanings and functions can always be found as time elapses and contexts shift, enabling data to be viewed in different ways. This will be discussed further in chapter 7.

Each of the first two coding frames yielded a large number of codes. In the previous chapter, for ease of reference, each code referred to was cited in bold and defined in a footnote on every page where it was used. This chapter is based on the interpretation using the third coding frame, which yielded comparatively few codes and is therefore structured differently. In this chapter, each code from the third coding frame will be discussed in a separate section and defined in the text at the start of that section. The codes from the third coding frame, and their meanings, can also be found in appendix 9.

Apart from the initial stories told by participants (reproduced in full in appendix 4), 108 stories were identified in the data, of which 51 were classified as experience

stories, 43 as group stories, 10 as personal stories and four as performance stories. Luke's initial story was an experience story in itself, and included a personal story within that. Pam's initial story included a performance story. Otherwise there was no overlap between stories in the four classifications and the initial stories told by participants. The other 105 stories occurred in the discussions that took place after the initial stories had been told.

All the personal stories were short, mostly under 100 words. The experience stories were also mostly short although there were a handful of longer ones. Some of the group stories were very long, the longest containing almost 800 words.

Personal Stories

Personal stories were individuals' stories of their emotions, fantasies, aspirations and so on. They were told in order to share feelings, seek support, and express and create emotion. No personal stories were told in order to offer support to someone else during any of the MSM sessions, although this may be done in other contexts. There may have been other purposes to the personal stories told by participants, but those given above appear to be dominant.

Six of the 10 personal stories were not linked with any other story. Three personal stories were included in experience stories, one of which was Luke's initial story – although the other two formed sections of discussion rather than of an initial story. One personal story, also by Luke, appeared in the longest group story. This group story, told by two members of the Borders group, was about the way in which Sure Start was being marginalized by the local authority within whose area the tellers worked. Part of this group story is shown below, with the personal story it contains highlighted in bold:

*Luke: But it's almost like within, from a head of service, I feel we don't have any strong champions, we don't have any strong advocates actually going out there, I think we've sold that programme so hard and we've got every accolade you possibly could for it, both regionally and nationally, and I'm **hearing more about***

how successful we are from other partners around us than I am from the organisation itself, and that's really quite hurtful

Elaine: Yeah, yeah

Luke: And I suppose being me I sometimes internalise it, 'ooh god is it something about me', but it's almost like I feel that the people there don't have a sense of ownership for it, that it's something that happened possibly before they came there, has done incredibly well but somehow they don't feel that it's quite theirs, or have that sense of ownership.¹

This shows itself as a self-contained personal story in several different ways. To begin with, it is in the first person throughout, while the longer group story is almost entirely in the second or third person with only an occasional phrase or sentence in the first person. Then it tells of internal experience: hearing, feeling, and internalising feelings. And it has a beginning, a middle and an end, with an implication of consequentiality:

<i>I'm hearing more about how successful we are from other partners than I am from the organisation itself</i>	Beginning
<i>and that's really quite hurtful And I suppose being me I sometimes internalise it 'ooh god is it something about me'</i>	Middle
<i>but it's almost like I feel that the people there don't have a sense of ownership for it</i>	End

Luke is speaking of the parent organisation, in his (and Elaine's) case the local authority, and how that organisation does not value his Sure Start programme even though it has many local and national accolades. That feels hurtful to him, and he wonders whether it is in some way his fault. This is a clear depiction of emotional labour as outlined by Hochschild (1983:7), i.e. the need to manage one's own emotions, created by work, within the workplace. He then suggests an alternative reason, that maybe it is because the organisation does not have a sense of ownership. The implication is that the lack of a sense of ownership of the Sure Start programme by the parent organisation causes the organisation to undervalue the programme.

¹ Discussion of Simon's story, lines 364–377.

This is a clear illustration of someone telling a personal story to share feelings, seek support, and create and express emotion. When Luke signals that he is telling a personal story by expressing an emotion (*'that's really quite hurtful'*), Elaine immediately offers a supportive interjection (*'yeah, yeah'*). From the text alone, this interjection could be read in other ways, e.g. as expressing sarcasm or boredom. However, observation, together with repeated listening to the recording of the session, suggests that Elaine's interjection was intended to offer support by conveying her understanding of and sympathy for Luke's feelings in his situation. This interpretation also suggests that by expressing his own emotion of hurt, Luke created a feeling of sympathy in Elaine. And this demonstrates in practice one of the difficult aspects of studying emotion discussed in chapter 3: the way that speaking and hearing about one emotion can change and create other emotions – in this case, Luke's disclosure of his hurt feelings creating a feeling of sympathy in Elaine. The cyclical relationship between language and emotion, with meaning at its hub, will be explored further in chapter 9.

Experience and Group Stories

Experience stories were told to expound or illustrate views, share or attempt to validate experience, seek and offer support, and express and create emotion. Group stories were told to share and attempt to validate experience and/or feelings; confirm the extent to which views were mutually held; develop those views; seek and offer support; express and create emotion; and create sense and meaning. There may have been other purposes to the experience and group stories told by participants, but those appear to be dominant.

Nine of the group stories contained experience stories within them. For example, this group story was told by three members of the Shire group, in the discussion following Amy's story, towards the end of their MSM session. They are reflecting on their experience, and the subject of the group story is story itself.

Amy: They're different, if I say strata I'm not meaning to stack them all up necessarily on top of each other in order of value, so you've got the Government

issues and all the partnerships that attach at that high strategic and funding level, then the local strategic partnerships, then the partnership within the programme, and mine particularly was the lowest bit, it was about the partnership with parents and children, and I could almost see where each of the stories slots in and hits different levels of frustration or whatever

Pam: I think all of the stories had resonances for all of us

Rebecca: yeah

Pam: and we could see how that worked in our local, well or didn't work in our areas and so on as well, but I think you're right, I think it's all of those things together, I don't think any one of those stories told the whole thing, but we picked out

Rebecca: as a facet

Pam: yeah²

This group story is like an MSM within an MSM, in that it begins with an experience story from Amy that is built on in discussion by Pam and Rebecca. Amy's experience story is identifiable through its use of the first person, its telling of experience – in this case the different levels of partnership that Amy has experienced in her work – and because it has a beginning, a middle and an end. It also has an implication of consequentiality, i.e. that because of the many different levels of partnership and associated frustration, each story on the subject will slot in to one or more of them.

<i>They're different, if I say strata I'm not meaning to stack them all up necessarily on top of each other in order of value,</i>	Beginning
<i>so you've got the Government issues and all the partnerships that attach at that high strategic and funding level, then the local strategic partnerships, then the partnership within the programme, and mine particularly was the lowest bit, it was about the partnership with parents and children</i>	Middle
<i>and I could almost see where each of the stories slots in and hits different levels of frustration or whatever</i>	End

The group story is identifiable as a story in a similar way. It is a discrete story being told by three people about their experience that morning:

² Discussion of Amy's story, lines 782–801.

[Amy's experience story, as above]	Beginning
<i>Pam: I think all of the stories had resonances for all of us</i> <i>Rebecca: yeah</i> <i>Pam: and we could see how that worked in our local, well or didn't work in our areas and so on as well</i>	Middle
<i>but I think you're right, I think it's all of those things together, I don't think any one of those stories told the whole thing, but we picked out</i> <i>Rebecca: as a facet</i> <i>Pam: yeah</i>	End

Amy's experience story identifies several levels of partnership working and implies that each level of partnership has a corresponding level of frustration. She tentatively concludes that each of the four stories told by the members of the Shire group could fit within this framework. The group story accepts and extends this theory, telling how '*all of the stories had resonances for all of us*', the general term 'resonances' suggesting more than just the specific 'partnership' and 'frustration'. No one story '*told the whole thing*', the implication is that '*all of those things together*' depicted the overall picture of levels of partnership working and frustration created by this group for their own understanding.

Amy's experience story uses the geological metaphor of 'strata' to illustrate her view of the partnership environment and share her experience of being in that environment in the light of the stories told during the MSM. (The etymological similarity between 'strata' and 'strategic' may have prompted her to choose that particular metaphor.) In the group story, Rebecca and Pam accept Amy's view and confirm that they share it. It is likely that this served to validate Amy's view to some extent. This was one of many examples of participants sharing and validating each other's experience in a supportive way.

Some group stories contain several experience stories. For example, three members of the Borders group construct a story about the working relationships between Sure Start programmes and the local authority, using a series of experience stories in the process. (This is the story that was summarised in chapter 5 in discussing the management of identity.) The group story begins with

a statement from Luke about his experience of managing the relationship between his team and the local authority:

*Luke: It's trying to absolutely keep all those people feeling part of it and feeling in touch and feeling still stimulated about it and not being part of a local authority, not seeing themselves within that mould, but seeing themselves empowered and seeing themselves as valued and important in that.*³

This leads to an experience story from Simon, which he introduces with a short link:

*Simon: I think it's interesting that you say about not seeing themselves as part of the local authority because I have done everything to push for the whole team to be seen as the local authority, because when I started the team was very much at the danger of being set up as an island that would exist outside of the local authority and go to the local authority as and when it suited. If things were to go wrong, like there was a fire or a child was bleeding or there was a child protection issue, then the local authority was there, but if things were going well, they didn't need them, they would almost say [double 'V' sign] to the local authority, and I've done so much work to push them into feeling that they work for the County Council or the local authority, and that as part of that the benefits are that we work on this piece of work that happens to be Sure Start but you are part of the local authority, and that's been very challenging at times, very frustrating, when you've had some senior workers as well as the front-line staff who perhaps haven't shared that same wish and desire to be part of the local authority. But I've stuck with it because I think the benefits of having the services integrated as part of the local authority means that we have far greater advantages than we would have had had we just been a small little island.*⁴

Simon is talking about his experience of managing his team's relationship with the local authority, and how that feels (beginning with something potentially dangerous, then becoming hard, challenging and frustrating, and finally feeling

³ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 419–422.

⁴ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 424–441.

beneficial). He is expounding and illustrating his view that in this context, the results of managing that relationship in the way he had chosen were worth the effort it took. He appears to be doing this to make an offer of support to Luke on the basis of Luke's previous statement – even though Luke was saying the opposite and Simon clearly does not agree with him – by suggesting an alternative way to look at the situation.

Luke then produces a reflective linking sentence followed by another experience story:

Luke: I suppose it's about taking the advantages and using those bits, and not taking the disadvantages. I suppose one of the first things we did was to get everybody on full job contracts, whereas everyone else before was on fixed term contracts, and that could only really be done through the local authority, that was through the grace of the local authority but also negotiating with the local authority to say that it wasn't in their advantage to have people on fixed term contracts. So some of that is taking those parts of it, and I suppose within that statement were wanting to communicate was the fact of that they were still being in the process where they could be innovative, fast-moving and changing, and to a certain extent have some of the benefits of voluntary organisations, whereas I suppose I carry a view of local authorities as being rather sluggish, hard to change direction, which might not be your experience of it.⁵

Luke is expounding his view of local authorities as comparatively inert. He is validating Simon's experience, related in the previous story, by taking it seriously and reflecting on his own experience in the light of Simon's. He does not express emotion overtly, but his reflective stance and his repeated use of the phrase '*I suppose*' indicate that Simon's story may have uncovered some uncertainty in Luke and possibly a desire to demonstrate his willingness to change (unlike the torpid local authority of his perception).

Simon again uses a short link to introduce another experience story:

⁵ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 443–455.

*Simon: No, I think there's definitely a degree of it, but I think one of the things that works in our favour is when you've got staff, your own members of your own team, so actually I'm so glad we're not based at County Hall so we don't have to clock in, we don't have to do all those kinds of things, so they actually see the day-to-day benefits of working in a Sure Start programme with all the supportive structure of the local authority, I think it's really an interesting one.*⁶

He begins by validating Luke's experience, at least to some extent. He then shares more of his own experience to illustrate his view of the positive aspects of working with, but not in, a local authority. He expresses some of the positive feelings that this creates for him such as gladness and interest. This may again be an offer of support to Luke.

Elaine goes straight into an experience story of her own:

Elaine: I think that's how my team would feel, because a lot of us worked for the local authority before, so we've got a lot of local authority employees who have moved across into Sure Start, so they've got a sense of corporate, and I think the best bit therefore is you've got a corporate backup and corporate infrastructure but you've got your own Sure Start branding as well. And people who have worked in our County Hall and who now work out in the community have all said 'I would never go back, I couldn't go back and work in there again with all the constraints that that's got'. But they've got the benefits of the support, and we're on the intranet, and they can tap into all the policies and all of those sorts of things, and I think as well from a programme management point of view that's a support because we don't want to write an equal opportunities policy or whatever else, you can take the bits that are there and just add on

*Luke: And apply them. Yes.*⁷

Elaine is expressing not only her own emotions but also her presumptions about those of her team, with whom she seems closely identified in this story – 'a lot of us worked for the local authority before'. She is sharing her experience to

⁶ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 457–462.

⁷ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 464–478.

expound and illustrate her view that there are pros and cons to working with a local authority, and if the correct balance can be struck, it can ultimately be beneficial and helpful to the Sure Start team and manager. She uses her story to identify the common ground between Luke and Simon, which enables Luke to make an unequivocally positive comment for the first time in the group story. Simon, presumably now satisfied that he has got his point across, remains quiet, and Elaine and Luke end the group story together:

Elaine: But it is a funny hybrid world that you're in, because you have to spend a lot of time developing the Sure Start brand, and having a sense of team identity around that as well as

Luke: Yeah, definitely.

Elaine: The other.

*Luke: Therein lies the challenge.*⁸

Despite the ambiguity of Fred's silence, it would seem that that this group story confirmed mutual perceptions or views. It also demonstrably helped to develop those views for at least one group member, Luke. Much experience and emotion was shared, and some of it validated. Support was sought and offered, emotions expressed and created. And the extracts above suggest a process of meaning making that enabled a consensus to be reached, at least between Elaine and Luke and possibly one or both of the others as well.

Creating Sense and Meaning

The group stories have one clear difference from the personal and experience stories. The personal and experience stories are used to report internal and personal experience, and – in the main – are received by listeners without direct comment. However, in the group stories it is possible to trace a more active process of meaning making between two or more people. As with the link between language, emotion and meaning, discussed above, there is also a link between story, emotion and meaning. For example, the telling of any story is an

⁸ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 480–488.

experience that creates meaning and emotion for the individual that can be retold in its turn (I told them my story/they didn't listen/I felt resentful). The experience of listening to a story also has these features (he told such a boring story/I couldn't concentrate/I felt guilty afterwards). Tellers and listeners often come away with different understandings of the same story and different feelings about it. But the telling of a group story appears to help people co-create meanings. For example, the group story above encapsulates the pros and cons of working in a Sure Start programme within a local authority – two of the different levels of partnership told of in Amy's experience story (above). Luke sets out one end of a spectrum, i.e. *'not being part of a local authority'*. Simon follows this up with an experience story illustrating the opposite: *'I have done everything to push for the whole team to be seen as the local authority'*, giving reasons and also acknowledging that there are some disadvantages to this. Luke then moderates his position through another experience story, acknowledging some advantages of being closely related to a local authority, but continuing to reject the disadvantages and giving reasons for his position. Simon then moderates his own position through yet another experience story, highlighting another disadvantage of the situation. Elaine produces an optimistic experience story, and Elaine and Luke conclude for the group that both identities – Sure Start and local authority – are necessary and must be worked on together, creating *'a funny hybrid world'*. This sequence of stories making up a whole, a kind of envelope story like the one told by Rebecca in the Shire group, builds layer on layer of meaning as it goes, enabling the participants to co-create a strong foundation for mutual understanding.

Luke's first experience story in the group story above has strong resonances with what Hochschild (1983:7) called 'emotional management', i.e. controlling the emotions of others. He makes it very clear that for him it is part of his job to manage the emotions and perceptions of his team. Simon's first experience story also portrays a high degree of emotional management. This is not initially obvious, as at first Simon speaks from a more distanced viewpoint than Luke when he says *'I have done everything to push for the whole team to be seen as the local authority'*. However, in the middle of his story he remakes the statement with an emphasis on the emotional management aspect of the work: *'I've done so much work to push them into feeling that they work for the County Council or the*

local authority'. He then expands on that by explaining how it causes emotional labour for him too, because it is '*very challenging at times, very frustrating*'.

Luke's second experience story in the group story is more reflective, considering Simon's view that there are benefits in being allied with a local authority and adjusting his own previously stated separatist position. He seems a little uncertain, using the construction 'I suppose' four times in the story, and ends by offering Simon the opportunity to say that his experience of working with his local authority has been different from Luke's (as they work for different but neighbouring authorities). Simon starts his second experience story by partially rejecting that opportunity – '*No, I think there's definitely a degree of it*' – and then gives a positive emotional view of his programme's separation from the local authority, saying '*I'm so glad we're not based at County Hall so we don't have to clock in, we don't have to do all those kinds of things*'. These two experience stories are particularly interesting because they show Luke and Simon doing emotional work in the moment by thinking and feeling about what each other has been saying, then reflecting on this and adjusting their positions accordingly until they reach common ground.

This common ground enables Elaine's experience story, which could be entitled 'The Best of Both Worlds', in which she tells of the positive feelings of herself and her team about being allied with, but separate from, the local authority. She and Luke are then able to conclude the group story by acknowledging, on the other hand, how challenging it feels to have a foot in both camps. So this group has used their group story to share and validate their feelings and experiences, and to seek and offer support, as well as to create and share some meanings of those feelings and experiences.

Performance Stories

Performance story contributes to understanding in a different way, by enacting dramatic scenes to engage the listener more fully in the expression and creation of emotion. Pam used a performance story to conclude her story about Princess Susan and the task she had been set by her father, the king, to bring a circus into

a village that he saw as afflicted with boredom. At the beginning of this excerpt 'she' is Princess Susan and 'they' are village families.

And then she noticed little groups of them sitting round whingeing. So she said 'what's the matter?' and they said 'well this isn't what we expected, we didn't say we wanted this, this doesn't suit my kids, oh no, I don't think that's - that's not safe! Oh no we're not doing this any more.' Whereupon Susan said 'Well what do you think would be better, then?' And they went 'Well we don't know, you're the co-ordinator, tell us!' 'Well if I decide and you don't like it we'll be in the same boat again, won't we, so I think you need to think about what you would like.' Hmmm. There was a deafening silence. So Susan said 'Well, how about we actually go into the circus, we'll go into the Big Top, and see whether you, something occurs to you and whether you actually like that.'

So they sat down, they were all bought candy floss, they all sat there, their children appeared to be enjoying it, and at the end of it all Susan said 'what did you think?' 'Well, the clowns were quite good; that was all right; didn't like that ringmaster, though, he was a bossy, hmmm, I wouldn't want him telling me what to do, no no no no, didn't like that bit.'

So they all went home, and Susan then went to report to the king and the ministers.

'So, what did you learn, Susan?'

'Well, you can't please all of the people all the time. However, trying to get people to engage with something is much more difficult than I thought it was going to be.' And the minister said 'Well that's all very well but we've spent all this money, and you only took 50 people. How are you going to get more people together?'

'Oh, I can't force them.'

'Yes you can, and you've got to get more people there before next week.'

'Oh, right,' said Susan.

So Susan went away, sat in her lonely little tower, and cried. Then she went back to them and said 'Well I can't do it on my own, I need some support.' And they said 'OK, you can have the Minister of Arts to help you.' He was a very nice chap, but not very practical. The end.⁹

⁹ Pam's story, lines 33–64 – see also appendix 4.

This has all the elements of a performance. It has direct speech, which has been punctuated according to convention for ease of reading, but which Pam simply spoke. Repetition is used ('*no no no no*') and expressive sounds ('*hmmm*'). It has a witty aside, where Pam changes role from storyteller to narrator by stepping outside the story and commenting on the abruptness of its conclusion ('*The end*'). Also, at first glance it appears that the whole story is in the past tense. However, some sections of dialogue sound very immediate, where speeches are given with no 'X said' or 'said Y' attributions to characters.

The story also contains clear depictions of emotional management and emotional labour. Princess Susan has to manage the emotions of the parents who are complaining, unhappy, fearful, rejecting and begrudging. She also has to do her own emotional labour as she is told to take on an impossible task (the impossibility being another form of emotional management, i.e. forcing people to do something against their will), goes away for a good cry on her own, and then goes back to ask for help. The end of the story suggests that this emotional labour is not finished, as the help she is offered is likely to be inadequate.

Voices

Another interesting point about this performance story is that it contains a number of different voices. The 'voice' code does not refer to the actual speaker, but to the other voices that he or she uses in telling the story, some of which may be hidden voices. For example, in all the group story extracts considered previously in this chapter, there is only one voice other than that of the tellers, the staff voice in Elaine's experience story, saying '*I would never go back, I couldn't go back and work in there again with all the constraints that that's got*'. But Pam's performance story contains the alternating voices of a Sure Start manager (represented by Princess Susan – the analogy is clear in the story, and was confirmed during the subsequent discussion) with parents in the first part, and a Sure Start manager with central government (the king and the ministers) in the second part.

The Sure Start manager's voice, unsurprisingly, is the one most commonly used by participants in this research, appearing 43 times in the data. This is not to say that every time a participant spoke they used a Sure Start manager's voice. Simon told his entire story in a Sure Start manager's voice, but he was the exception, and most uses of a Sure Start manager's voice were to say something short and specific. For example, in the discussion of Pam's story, Pam again used a Sure Start manager's voice for illustration. Here is the relevant extract with the manager's voice in bold:

*Well, Susan did do some consultation with them, and said '**what do you think you would like, well what shall we do, what shall we bring in to this area?**', and I think there was an element of, go on, sorry Patrick¹⁰*

The words Pam gives to Susan here in discussion were not used in the story that she told in the first place. It was described there thus: '*she organised the travelling show to come, having spoken to the local people about what they would like, what they wouldn't like, and so the show came to town*'¹¹. Therefore the sentence in bold in the extract above was using a story character's voice, Princess Susan's voice, as well as a Sure Start manager's voice. All members of the City group and two members of the Shire group used story characters' voices in discussion in this way, to illustrate or clarify points made in the original story.

After the Sure Start manager's voice, parents' voices are the next most commonly used (22 times), then story characters' voices (21), central government voice (17), storyteller's voice (13 – all 12 stories and Joe, towards the end of the City group's MSM session, saying of all four of their stories '*maybe I'll tell them sometimes*'¹²), local government voice (11) and staff voices (8). Other voices used are a community voice (6), an automated voice (4), an impotent voice (4), an internal voice (2) and a leader's voice (1). Taking out the story characters' voices and the storyteller's voice, which are obviously influenced by the nature of the data construction, these voices and the proportions in which they appear give an

¹⁰ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 605–607.

¹¹ Pam's story, lines 27–29; see also appendix 4.

¹² Discussion of Sadie's story, line 535.

interesting picture of the 'mind's ear' of a programme manager. Their own voice, and the voices of their peers, are the loudest (although this may also be influenced by the nature of the data construction, because they were interacting in a group of peers). Then come parents, central government, local government, staff and community, in that order. Children's voices do not appear at all.

Typical Characters

It is also interesting to compare the voices with the typical characters that appear in the data. A 'typical character' is one who is emblematic, whose attributes in some way represent a group or category of people rather than a specific individual. The attributes in question may not be the only attributes displayed by the relevant group or category of people, but they will be recognisably characteristic of the type. For example, a typical librarian would like books; a typical king would wear a crown; a typical sportswoman would be physically fit.

Typical characters appear in most stories, and the MSM initial stories are no exception. For example, there are three in this excerpt from Cath's initial story:

... the leader of these ponies, a little bit like the New Forest ponies, said that they'd been given orders to clear their forest and because it was going to be taken over, they didn't know by who, or what, but orders had come from on high that they'd got to clear this forest and find another place to live, so they wanted to turn these out of this glade, you see, and take over. And they came in, and Mother Rabbit tried to speak to them and tell them that this glade, they were willing to share this glade, but they were such big animals, if they just came in all they would do, they would trample it all down, and all the extended families, and everything they'd got down there, and they'd all lived so happily together, they would just be crushed, and there would be no way of getting them back into that family.¹³

The whole excerpt is coded with 'typical leader': the leader of the ponies is typical of leaders in that he has targets to achieve and they are his priority. Part of the

¹³ Cath's story, lines 50–60; see also appendix 4.

second sentence (*'they'd been given orders to clear their forest and because it was going to be taken over, they didn't know by who, or what, but orders had come from on high that they'd got to clear this forest and find another place to live'*) was coded with 'typical central government' – typical in that it gives directives about what must be done, leaving room for some local discretion about how its requirements are met. Then the last part of the excerpt, from 'Mother Rabbit' onwards, is coded with 'typical heroine', because she is trying to save the glade for everyone who lives there.

This excerpt also shows the often-twinned emotions of desire and fear. The typical leader wants to take over the glade because, by implication, he is afraid to disobey or even question the orders from on high. Mother Rabbit wants to save the glade because she is afraid of losing her home and her community.

Then, in the discussion of the story, Joe is questioning Cath about her story. The excerpt below is all coded with 'typical heroine' and 'typical community':

Cath: Well, if Mother Rabbit came into that glade, and she brought her family into the glade, would she, she worked with those others, didn't she, she didn't just take the glade over

Joe: Right, yeah

Cath: she talked, she spoke to, they all had a role within that glade, and they all felt comfortable within that glade

Joe: Yeah

*Cath: You know, the ants cleared away all the rubbish that was left, and the ladybirds flew out and brought back things to pollinate the plants that were in there, and the birds were there, there was everything, they all had a role, and not one role was more important than the other, because they needed that to live happily in that glade, which they had done. It doesn't mean to say that the glade can't change, because there's Mother Rabbit changing, it worked there, it's just that these ponies are so heavy footed
(laughter)*

*Cath: and she's trying to protect that, she doesn't want to keep them out.*¹⁴

As in the previous excerpt, Mother Rabbit is acting as a typical heroine by trying to save the glade. Then there is a depiction of a typical (happy) community, where everyone has a role and feels comfortable. There is also one small phrase (*'these ponies are so heavy footed'*) that is coded with 'typical leader': typical because they do not understand or prioritise the needs of others, and therefore threaten to spoil their lives.

A typical leader appears most frequently, with 31 identifiable occurrences in the data. A typical representative of central government, and a typical community, tie for second place (25 times each). A typical professional is in third place with 12 occurrences. Then there are typical facilitators and heroines (7 each), monarch (5), local government (4), mysterious stranger (2), bureaucrat (2), lovers (1) and children (1). As shown above, the characters are used to illustrate and reinforce points made by the participants in a way that is emotionally safe, creative and instructive.

Audiences

The 'audience' code does not refer to the actual audience, but to other audiences that may appear in the story, or other audiences the story may be addressing, some of which may be hidden audiences. For example, an overt audience was present in the stories and discussions of the Shire and Borders groups. Three of the stories used the audience metaphor explicitly: the stories of Pam and Simon, both featuring circuses, and the story of Rebecca, featuring storytellers. Others used it more implicitly, such as Fred's story outlining an imaginary sequel to the film *King Kong*. Films have audiences, although they are removed in time and space from the actors' performances, which in turn are often removed in time and space from each other as films are rarely made in the sequence in which they appear. (This is an interesting link with the 'feeling of space and distance',

¹⁴ Discussion of Cath's story, lines 217–238.

meaning 'a feeling of being apart or remote from another individual, group or organisation in any context', from the second coding frame.)

Patrick's satirical story from the Shire group told of the '*baying crowd*' (although when he was asked why 'baying' he replied that it had been a 'throw-in word' and should probably be 'expectant or hopeful'). This '*baying crowd*' in fact acted as a passive audience, as the end of his story shows: the Sure Start manager '*would go out and tell the people outside that despite them not having noticed very much in the past six months, that an enormous amount of work had been undertaken and an enormous amount of achievement had been achieved, and that there was very little to worry about and that things would only get better in the future if they would just sit and wait*'.¹⁵ Rebecca, reflecting on Pam's and Patrick's stories, said that there was '*no sense of any interaction between the group of the project people come in and set up and the crowd, they're both very separate within both of the stories, and there's no sense of the crowd and these partnership people interacting, doing things together*'.¹⁶ Amy's story, the fourth in the Shire group, featured a group of people and '*sproglets*' standing on a motorway bridge watching cars whizzing to London to help make decisions about sproglets. They try to get to London to join in, but fail, and end up back on the bridge, also acting as a passive audience for the decision-makers whizzing past in their cars. Patrick, reflecting on this, says '*I think what I get a sense of is a disillusioned community, you see, they're content now to stand on the bridge, and that's like, they've come a little bit but "that's our lot, we're happy with that"*'.¹⁷

For the Shire group, and in Simon's initial story from the Borders group, the audience is the community and the performers are local and central government. In the Borders group discussions, everyone involved in the Sure Start programme, including the local community, are the performers, and the local and central government are the audience. It is interesting that this can be depicted both ways round. In the discussion of Fred's story, Simon illustrates the local community as performers through an experience story:

¹⁵ Patrick's story, lines 56–61; see also appendix 4.

¹⁶ Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 493–496.

¹⁷ Discussion of Amy's story, lines 386–388.

*I can remember when we hosted a visit of county councillors, and they came along to our centre, and I said to the parents in advance 'I'm very sorry, it's going to feel like a goldfish bowl, we're going to have loads of people coming in, who haven't got a clue who you are and what you do and why you're here, but actually if you can just say "hi" to them if you want to, or whatever, just acknowledge that they're there, that's absolutely fine'. And then on the day of the visit I rang round to the centre to make sure everybody was OK and it was still all sorted, and we went out, and the parents were really enjoying the fact that they had one set of people to talk to who seemed to be very interested in them, but then the third visit the fourth visit the fifth visit the sixth visit the seventh visit tends to dilute that same level of interest, but it's about saying it's important to show people, and balance the fact that you've got people sat in a goldfish bowl who are being looked at because they're disadvantaged and in an impoverished situation.'*¹⁸

Here Simon is giving a very clear illustration of his emotional management style in practice. He manages the parents' pre-visit emotions by explaining what's going to happen in advance, including an apology for his expectation that it will '*feel like a goldfish bowl*' to the parents – as if they are under scrutiny with nowhere to hide. He tells them that the visitors '*won't have a clue*' about who the parents are, what they do and why they're here, which may serve a dual function in Simon's management of his own emotions: both by preparing the ground for explaining away anything the parents have not liked about the visit after the event, and by saving him having to explain the purpose of the visit to the parents in the unvarnished terms he uses in the safety of the peer group, i.e. that the parents will be '*being looked at because they're disadvantaged and in an impoverished situation*'. On the day he rings before the visit to check that '*everybody*' is OK, and his use of the word '*everybody*' here indicates that at this point he may be using this caring approach to help him manage the emotions of staff as well as parents. He finishes by describing the tension between the need to '*show people*' what his Sure Start centre is doing and the need to respect the rights of the people in the

¹⁸ Discussion of Fred's story, lines 527–540.

disadvantaged, impoverished community he serves. Here, again, the Sure Start manager is 'caught in the middle'.

It is particularly interesting that regardless of whether the local community are seen as performers or audience they are still depicted as essentially passive. In discussion of Rebecca's story, three members of the Shire group create a group story around this theme. Rebecca's story contrasts a big powerful storyteller who used lots of '*bells and whistles*' with three simple storytellers whose stories were actually more effective than the big storyteller's, and an audience that has no power at all:

Pam: Somewhere along the line I sort of half expected as I was listening to it that the crowd would then challenge

Patrick: mmm

Pam: the bells and whistles, I don't know why, I just had this thought that maybe they would, because they'd become engaged and it had affected what they'd thought and their emotions, what with the three storytellers had said, because it had done all that, whether they would then challenge what they'd been fed previously, I don't know, I just wondered whether there would be something, you know, whether we'd get the revolution.

Rebecca: You can hear the stories, but it depends how powerful and strong a person is, I suppose

(pause)

Patrick: I think the same, I think actually the crowd didn't, that there was no development out of

Rebecca: No

Patrick: the crowd just sort of took it, and that's it, and I'm not sure what their attitude to it was in that sense, could have either went to everything's back to normal, they go off to the nether regions, or as you said they should say 'well we want more of these simple stories', but it just seemed to be the end of the status quo in my own mind if I was finishing that story off it sounds as if that's it, think that things wouldn't change, the great storyteller would still tell the stories and you'd have these people pottering around on the edges and that's all they would ever do is potter around on the edges, and maybe doing

Rebecca: I would hope there would be more whispering, I think, and eventually a revolution

Pam: yeah, I think

*(laughter)*¹⁹

It seems from this group story that the participants are frustrated by the passivity of the audience/crowd/community, and would like it to change. Elsewhere in the discussion Pam identifies the telling of stories as a potential lever for such change, saying that *'those storytellers were able to connect with people, they were able to think about them and listen to them, and then maybe they'd become advocates as well, so possibly they retell the stories again, which is important for, I don't know, it's almost like that thing about giving people and showing people something that they then take to themselves and then move it on again'*.²⁰ This suggests that Pam sees stories as potentially powerful tools.

As the third coding frame suggests (appendix 9), as well as overt audiences the literature had also created an expectation of finding hidden audiences and hidden voices. (This is an interesting link between the narrative analysis literature and the emotion in the workplace literature, which, as shown in chapter 3, also considers that which is or may be hidden.) On close reading of the data neither were apparent. The evaluation of the pilot, as discussed in chapter 4, suggests that this may be because the participants were all of equal status.

Rehearsed and Rehearsal Stories

The audience metaphor is closely linked with the themes of performance and concealment, also discussed by the Shire and Borders groups (see chapter 5). Given this, it might be expected that the 'rehearsed' code (used where a story seems to be a well-rehearsed and polished performance) and the 'rehearsal' code (used where a story seems to be being told as a rehearsal for another performance) would be widely used. In fact, only one passage was coded with

¹⁹ Discussion of Rebecca's story, lines 522–558.

²⁰ Discussion of Rebecca's story, lines 189–194.

'rehearsal', where Patrick is discussing Pam's story and seems to be working up a statement for future use:

*... the sense of isolation and criticism of what people do, if they're given a task, an undefined task in many ways, and they set about it with gusto and all the rest, and end up being chastised for something that isn't really their fault, partly because they were given, again, an ill-defined task I think. When it's put back again to almost a sort of help with it I don't think there's the same sort of help coming forward, you're still left very much to your own devices, and again I think ultimately you're the person who takes the flak in the end, even though you try to get the community, the people of the village, to come in and decide what they want, but even when you do that, it's still not what they want, and it isn't their fault, it's still someone else's fault, primarily yours ...*²¹

In Patrick's satirical story the programme manager is depicted as the '*lonely wretch sitting at the bottom of the table*' who is '*of little significance to the story*'.²² The switch in the middle passage from the third person to the second person shows Patrick identifying more closely with his discussion topic as he clarifies his ideas. He seems to be struggling with feelings of being isolated, undervalued, unsupported and responsible – a difficult combination. (See chapter 5 for more on the theme of identification.)

Sure Start managers are intelligent, articulate people. This could explain the infrequency of rehearsal speech, but might lead to an expectation of more frequent rehearsed speech. This was not the case. All the initial stories were rehearsed, but in discussion, rehearsed speech was rare. One section from Elaine and one from Patrick were coded in this way, and seven sections from Pam (a talkative person whose speech, on close inspection, often appears to be rehearsed). For example, in discussion of her own story, Pam says

I think it is really important that you keep people as on board as you can be, but somehow I still think there is an element, within doing consultation, of people

²¹ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 121–131.

²² Patrick's story lines 21–22 and 28; see also appendix 4.

*saying 'well that's all very well, we'll tell you what we think, and you've asked us, and we'll just say the first thing that comes into our head, because it'll send you away, and you'll do it, and then we'll decide whether we like it when you've done it, because it might work and it might not', and it's that level of you can't win anyway.*²³

This flows very smoothly in contrast to the jerkiness of Patrick's 'rehearsal' section (above). Even without knowing that consultation is a key aspect of Sure Start, a reader could deduce that this topic is close to Pam's heart and that she understands how it does and does not work. She depicts the community voice (the section in inverted commas) in a sing-song way that points to previous rehearsal. And she is dealing with one of the most common emotions expressed by Sure Start managers: frustration.

Story Making

The 'story making' code was used when participants discussed how their stories had been made. The Shire group showed a particular interest in this, and an awareness that told stories are in some respects mutable rather than fixed. For example, some participants focused on aspects of their stories that they had intended to include but had in fact left out of the telling as it happened. In discussion of her story, Pam said that one aspect she'd had in mind had been left out of the story as she told it, and concluded *'that was the different version, and as I say, it would be different again if I told it again, because I'd think of something else I'd want to shove in it.'*²⁴ Amy from the Shire group and Fred from the Borders group each echoed this, saying that one aspect they'd had in mind had been left out of the story when they told it. In discussion of Pam's story, she and Rebecca concluded that if you retell a story it is likely to come out differently. This may be because a story cannot be told in the same context twice. Even if it is told twice, to the same group of people, on the same occasion, the context for the second telling is different. This is because the teller has already told the story and the listeners have already heard it. At the first telling, the teller is telling the story

²³ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 166–172.

²⁴ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 484–485.

for the first time (or for the first time in that context) and the listeners are hearing it for the first time (or for the first time in that context). Therefore, their experience of telling and listening does not include a similar recent experience, while at the second telling, it does. And other contextual changes may occur, even in a short interval: the sun may come out or the rain begin, blood sugar may drop and bladders fill. Another factor may be memory. Neither Pam, Amy or Fred spoke of remembering or forgetting, but it seems likely from their explanations that in the telling of their stories one aspect was forgotten from each. Interestingly, though, despite this mutability, none of their stories seemed incomplete. Although the aspects they had 'left out' would have been congruent with the stories they told, their omission was not noticed by the listeners, and would never have been known if the tellers had not revealed them in discussion.

There were many occasions in discussion where the storyteller was questioned, mostly with open questions such as 'what did you mean when ... ', 'why did the ... ' and so on. But there was only one occasion in discussion where a group member clearly misinterpreted an aspect of a told story. In discussion of Sadie's story, Joe suggested that an unemotional life could be seen as comfortable, in a way.

*If they actually went home after a day of seven hours and thirty minutes or whatever it was, and I would imagine that they could live with their fairly flat sterile part of the day, if it meant the other part of the day was rich and fulfilling. (laughs) I know people who can, anyway, and do.*²⁵

Cath picked up on this and made the assumption that the situation in the story had been that the characters went home at night. She and Joe continued the discussion on that basis, for a few exchanges, before Sadie reminded them that in fact her characters had been trapped in their emotionless life for 24 hours a day. After this the group returned to discussing the story in its own terms. The fact that such a misunderstanding only occurred once in all three MSM sessions suggests that Sure Start managers may be skilled and careful listeners.

²⁵ Discussion of Sadie's story, lines 472–475.

Endings were difficult for the MSM participants, perhaps because they were telling stories about an experience that had not ended for them. Cath from the City group criticised her own story for not being finished, but then after a short pause for reflection she acknowledged her own power as the storyteller, saying '*I suppose I could make it whatever sort of ending I wanted it to be, couldn't I?*'²⁶ Pam from the Shire group also criticised her own story for having an unsatisfactory ending because she had '*just left it hanging*'.²⁷ Patrick replied: '*Maybe that's because it never ends, that's the prognosis of these stories, it's just ...*'²⁸ (It is notable here that Patrick's own sentence was left hanging too!) Rebecca from the Shire group, Sadie from the City group and Bob from the City group also expressed feelings of dissatisfaction about the endings of their stories. Pam and Rebecca agreed that '*we do expect endings*'.²⁹

Story Changing

The 'story changing' code was used when participants talked about different ways in which a story could be told, and what would change as a result. For example, in discussion of four stories, Patrick's and Amy's from the Shire group, and Cath's and Bob's from the City group, members of the group worked together spontaneously to create an alternative ending to the story for consideration and discussion. Bob's initial story was about the building of a big new bridge between two villages, to replace a much-loved but rickety old one, which ended in financial penalties for the villagers rather than the wonderful new amenity that had originally been envisaged. In discussion of Bob's story, Sadie's questioning enabled Bob to put forward an alternative ending:

Sadie: So did she sacrifice herself rather than jump out of despair? Potentially? Did she actually, was it self-sacrifice as it was the only way that she could see out of that situation?

Joe: Depends if she left a note.

(laughter)

²⁶ Discussion of Cath's story, lines 189–190.

²⁷ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 244–245.

²⁸ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 247–248.

²⁹ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 366–388.

Sadie: Did she leave a note, Bob?

Bob: Well, no, I did have this, the other idea was that she jumped, and that he blew up the bridge because it was a symbol of the whole destruction.

Sadie: Aah

Joe: Yeah

Bob: To bring the whole thing to an end

Joe: Yeah

Bob: He destroyed the bridge, which separated the two communities, and cause the stranger to go away because then there was no infrastructure for the stranger to make any money out of.

Joe: Yeah

Bob: So her death caused him to blow the bridge up, because that was the symbol of what it had originally destroyed, what was a very perfect idea.

Joe: Yes. And so the two communities went back to being separate, and eventually

Bob: At some point in the future, built a rickety old bridge.

(laughter)

(pause)³⁰

This alternative ending seems to key into the emotion of nostalgia as expressed by Sadie earlier in the discussion of this story (see chapter 5). It also seemed somehow satisfying for the participants, as it led to laughter and a pause before a change of subject rather than to further discussion of the issues it raised, whereas the original ending had been followed by a pause and then Sadie saying '*it's quite sad really*'.³¹

Fred's initial story, interestingly, provided an alternative ending in itself. His story was a sequel to the film *King Kong*, and began by explaining that Kong had not died at the end of that film, as everyone thought, but was taken in and cared for by Fay Wray's character and a biologist friend of hers. He then went on to tell a very inventive story about the sequence of events that followed, as described in chapter 5.

³⁰ Discussion of Bob's story, lines 456–493.

³¹ Discussion of Bob's story, line 87.

Patrick's initial story was a pointed and downbeat satire, showing partnership working as a triumph of style over substance, in which the community were discontented but passive and the Sure Start manager was a '*lonely wretch*'. Towards the end of the discussion of his story I gave the usual two-minute warning. The group, led by Patrick himself, used most of those two minutes to create an alternative and much more upbeat ending for Patrick's story in which the community were active, lucky and happy:

Patrick: The end of the story actually was that the crowd sorted out a lottery syndicate

Amy: Ah

Patrick: And won a fortune

(laughter)

Patrick: And built a castle in Ireland, and lived happily ever after

Pam: And told the professionals where they could go

(laughter)

Rebecca: But where did the poor wretch go? Did he join the crowd?

Patrick: Oh, the poor wretch just moved on to another initiative!

Rebecca: Oh, no!

(laughter)

(inaudible)

Rebecca: You mean they rejected him, and didn't embrace him and take him on?

Patrick: With less pay and a shorter contract

(laughter)

Rebecca: Aah

Patrick: So, the lot of the poor wretch is not a happy one (singing: happy one)³²

Interestingly, the spirit of the original satire was retained in that although the change made things better for the community, it made things worse for the '*poor wretch*', i.e. the Sure Start manager.

³² Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 631–664.

Story Mixing

The 'story mixing' code was used when, for example, a character from one story was used to make a point in discussion of another story, or common themes from two or more stories were discussed. The Shire group and the City group both mixed stories together in at least one of their discussions. Towards the end of the discussion of Amy's story, the last of the four in the Shire group, the participants were drawing together and summarising some themes they had explored.

Rebecca, Patrick and Pam were discussing the possibility that communities may be content until they know that someone far away is making decisions about them, and also that the resulting discontent can be stirred up by community activists.

Amy drew their attention to this as a theme common to all their stories, at which point the group seemed to become very excited, at times talking over each other to the point of being inaudible in the recording:

Amy: It's all our stories together, now, one after the other.

Rebecca: Yes

Pam: Yeah, actually!

(inaudible)

Rebecca: Will Mrs G ever get off the motorway and go back into the community?

Pam: She's on the verge

(inaudible)

Rebecca: Or will she go back to

Pam: Or will she go to the other kingdom to help Princess Susan, or she could go and have a long conversation with Miss Think Outside The Box!³³

Pam, by suggesting that a character from Amy's story could enter her own story or Patrick's story, reinforces and expands Amy's point about the similarities between the stories. She also highlights the possibility of a pun in the ending of Amy's story, where Mrs G (i.e. Mrs Grobbet) was left on a verge – ostensibly a motorway verge, but also, perhaps, symbolically, an edge or turning point.

³³ Discussion of Amy's story, lines 607–624.

Towards the end of the discussion of Sadie's story, the third in the City group's session, Joe and Sadie seem to have a similar experience. They identify a theme that is common to all three stories told so far, which is first articulated by Joe:

Joe: There's this pressure on us to change to be the same, and there seems to be an element of that in the rolling out of Children's Centres, that there's an emphasis on uniformity and conformity rather than the emphasis being on devolved autonomy, which was part of Sure Start itself, wasn't it? Individualism and taking pride in individual rules has been a strong part of what we've been involved in, hasn't it.

Sadie: Back to Wetherspoons.

Joe: (laughs) Yeah, yeah, Wetherspoons, forests and sterile prisons, it's come through! But maybe these stories are a guard against, the reason why they won't come to fulfilment.

(pause)

*Joe: Maybe I'll tell them sometimes.*³⁴

Sadie recognises that the theme Joe articulates from her story is also held in the metaphor of Wetherspoons from his story, and Joe then builds on this by linking it with the metaphor of a forest glade from Cath's story. Again this leads to a pause and a change of subject, which may indicate a sense of closure.

It is interesting that Joe, like Pam (as shown at the end of the discussion of the audience codes, above), sees stories as potentially powerful tools. Rebecca's initial story, from the Shire group, was on one level all about the power of stories. She set up a conflict between a big powerful storyteller whose every word was captured by a scribe, and three simple storytellers who worked within the oral tradition:

This storyteller used to spin the most amazing magical stories, the sort of stories that should have fireworks and orchestral backing, and whenever the stories finished the silence was just overwhelming. Well one day the storyteller started to tell another great and fantastic story, but a rumour started up in the crowd, that

³⁴ Discussion of Sadie's story, lines 519–535.

*there were three new storytellers, each at the far reaches of the kingdom, but they didn't tell great and powerful stories, but they told much simpler stories, not the sort of stories that awed you into silence at the end, but the sort of stories where the whispers of the words stayed in the hearts and the minds long after the stories had finished.*³⁵

The powerful storyteller challenged the simple storytellers, saying that they would each tell a story about partnership. He told a story first, then each of the three simple storytellers told a story, and they were all written down by the powerful storyteller's scribe. They were then '*buried deep*' in a box with seven locks and taken away by the powerful storyteller. Rebecca ended her story by posing a question:

*So, what happened to those stories? Are they there in the box, or were the rumours true, that they were the sort of stories where the words stayed in their mind and the hearts long after they'd been told?*³⁶

This was later discussed by the group:

Patrick: He might have stolen those stories and used them for his own.

Rebecca: Yes, because he's got them in the box

Patrick: He's got them in the box

Rebecca: Now, and can retell them

Pam: Send them back to the nether regions with more of his grand stories and say no, no, this is the way we need to do it

Patrick: This is the way to tell it

*Pam: But then who's to say that being in the nether regions that there weren't some subversive storytellers who just carried on in their own sweet way anyway? Because they felt that that was the best way round things.*³⁷

³⁵ Rebecca's story, lines 10–19; see also appendix 4.

³⁶ Rebecca's story, lines 76–78; see also appendix 4.

³⁷ Discussion of Rebecca's story, lines 487–502.

These excerpts offer some interesting interpretations of power. For example, there is the power of the spoken word (storytelling), big and awesome power (the powerful storyteller), the power of the written word (the scribe), the power of the community (rumour in the crowd), power-over (the powerful storyteller taking the stories and locking them in a box with seven locks), power to affect people emotionally (stories staying in the hearts and minds), subversive power (storytellers carrying on in their own sweet way in the nether regions). This offers a broader conception of power than that provided by the thematic interpretation in chapter 5, and will be discussed further in chapter 7.

There seemed to be a drive to make each MSM session into a story of its own. For example, at the very end of the discussion of Bob's story, which was the last one told in the City group's session, the group spontaneously began to draw the threads of their stories together:

Sadie: Such, going through all the stories there's that sort of element of such potential and yet, despair really.

Bob: Mmm

Joe: A lack of fulfilment of vision because of complicated processes. And self-interest.³⁸

The evaluation session with each group gave them an opportunity to take this process further and to create their own ending for their MSM.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the participants were creating meanings and making interpretations during the data construction process. The story interpretation demonstrates that telling and listening to stories may help people to share feelings; expound and illustrate views; share and seek validation of experience; seek or offer emotional or practical support; express emotion and create feelings in others. Telling and listening to stories in groups may also help to confirm the

³⁸ Discussion of Bob's story, lines 520–526.

extent to which views are mutually held, develop those views, and create sense and meaning.

It is clear that stories told by Sure Start managers are not 'just stories' but have meanings and functions. This chapter demonstrates that much can be learned from stories beyond the explicit messages they carry, and suggests that stories are a fundamental means of communicating, teaching, learning and sharing – even though they are often seen as belonging to a child's bedtime or an adult's holiday rather than as an integral part of our lifelong growth and development. The organisation literature acknowledges this (e.g. Gabriel 2000, Abma 2003, Boje 2003, Denning 2004, Sims 2004), and this thesis offers the partnership literature the opportunity to engage with story on a similar basis.

The previous chapter showed how the data revealed a number of themes relating to the partnership and emotion literatures. These themes were found within the stories and discussions of the MSM. The interpretations in this chapter and chapter 5, taken together, have offered some new dimensions to the conceptualisation of some of these themes. In particular, the focus on the emotional dimension of partnership working has revealed a triad of three-way links between power, emotion and language; language, emotion, and meaning; and story, emotion and meaning. These links will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, which will attempt to draw together the issues from this chapter and chapter 5 in the light of the partnership and emotion literatures reviewed in chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter Seven – Discussion

Introduction

This chapter begins by drawing together some of the themes from the thematic and story interpretations in chapters 5 and 6, and discussing them in the context of the literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3. Using an interpretative approach, as set out in the Introduction and chapter 4, an attempt will be made to address the four research questions in the light of the academic literature and the data interpretation set out in earlier chapters. The research questions are:

1. How do Sure Start managers manage their own feelings and emotions?
2. How do Sure Start managers manage the feelings and emotions of others?
3. How do Sure Start managers navigate through the complex, ambiguous and uncertain emotional experiences of partnership working?
4. How do Sure Start managers make sense of their emotional experiences?

In the process of addressing these questions, a tentative start will be made on identifying some possible areas for future research. These will be discussed in more detail in chapter 9.

Discussion of Themes

The initial themes emerging from the data – power, trust, complexity, communication, identity, performance, tension and conflicting agendas – were similar to those identified in the partnership and emotion literatures. However, the emphasis on some of them seemed very different in the data and in the literature. For example, trust and identity both have a high profile in the partnership literature, but were rarely mentioned in the data.

As shown in chapter 2, trust is often seen as a necessary prerequisite for partnership working in the academic literature on partnership (e.g. Hudson and Hardy 2002:57, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:102, Vangen and Huxham 2003:6), but in this data – as in the policy literature – it is rarely mentioned. It did not arise

at all in the discussions of the Shire group, was mentioned in passing in the discussions of the Borders group, and was only covered at any length in the discussion of Bob's story by the City group. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the only emotions shown by the thematic interpretation to be linked with managing trust are trust and mistrust. Similarly, identity was only covered in the discussion of Luke's story by the City group, despite being given a high profile in both the academic and policy literatures on partnership. It is possible that the MSM had an impact on this. For example, trust may not have been an issue within the MSM because each group of participants was a peer group. Also, as shown in chapter 6, oral stories tend to involve 'typical characters' who have strong identities – kings, heroines, mysterious strangers – and therefore don't reflect, or lead to discussion reflecting, the changeable, negotiable nature of identity as put forward in the literature (e.g. Craib 1998:4, Maguire *et al* 2001:305, Beech and Huxham 2003:45–47). So it may be that the MSM, while evidently enabling discussion in some areas, reduces options for discussing issues of identity and – when used with peer groups – of trust.

Another possible reason for the lack of discussion of identity could be that Sure Start managers are secure in their professional identities, fostered by the strong Sure Start ethos and culture (chapter 2). Also it may be that, despite the lack of specific or coded mentions, both trust and identity are implicit within sections of story and discussion that would, at first sight, appear more concerned with another theme. For example, the partnership literature suggests that trust is closely linked with power (e.g. Rummery 2002:232, McEvily, Perrone and Zaheer 2003:99, Dowling, Powell and Glendinning 2004:313). And interpretation of some of the characters in the initial stories may tell us about aspects of a Sure Start manager's identity. For example, Princess Susan in Pam's story could be seen as showing the difficulty of a Sure Start manager trying to respond to directions from above when the local community is reluctant to be developed. The 'poor wretch' in Patrick's story could be seen as showing the powerlessness of a Sure Start manager caught between a rock and a hard place. In Rebecca's story, the big grand storyteller and the three simple storytellers could be said to show different faces of a Sure Start manager: the performer on stage with all the trappings of success, and the person working at community level to influence hearts and

minds. And Mrs Grobbet in Amy's story could be said to show the need for a Sure Start manager to be directed by local community members and to facilitate the development of that community. This approach, followed through all the stories, supports a summarised account of the identity of a Sure Start manager as a partially assumed identity of someone who is working at strategic, operational and community levels, and who is caught between agendas such that they are both powerless and powerful, successful and failing, persuasive and flexible. This looks much more like the negotiable, changeable identity put forward in the literature. It also makes some sense of the emotions that chapter 5 shows to be linked with managing identity in this research, which include feeling both supported and unsupported, as well as responsible, isolated, constrained and at risk of danger.

As shown in chapter 2, there are various ways of conceptualising power in the academic partnership literature, but however it is conceptualised, power is always seen as an inescapable ingredient of partnership working. This is supported by the data for this research, as each initial story and every discussion contained references to power. Further, chapter 3 demonstrated the inextricable links between power, language and emotion (Lutz 1988:54, Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990:vii), and chapter 6 showed that power and stories are also linked in a number of ways. Although the initial stories focused on how it felt to work in partnership, chapter 5 showed that each included clear expressions of how it felt to work within a hierarchy, and to be subject to – and at times required to exercise – power-over. Chapter 5 also showed that the dynamic balance of power between groups and agencies within and around a Sure Start partnership feels, to Sure Start managers, less like an equal partnership and more like a hierarchy with a pecking order. This is clearly illustrated in Cath's story, where no character speaks to any character more than one step away in the hierarchical pecking order. Although not explicit in the data interpretation, this seems likely to have implications for levels of trust within a partnership.

Sure Start managers seem uneasy about exercising power-over. Chapter 5 showed that they see Sure Start as a form of social engineering, and that their role within that, of imposing and maintaining limits set by the Government, leaves them

feeling challenged, depressed and uncomfortable. But chapter 6 shows that this is not the whole story of power within Sure Start. Rebecca's initial story explored several dimensions of power, and interpretation of this story and excerpts of its discussion offer a broader interpretation of power as including: the power of the spoken word, the written word and the community; power to affect people emotionally; big and awesome power-over; and subversive power (which could also be called 'power-under'). It seems that each of these types of power may have the potential to be used by Sure Start managers and others, to a greater or lesser extent, at different times and in different situations within partnership working. But even with such resources, Sure Start managers do not feel powerful; as shown in chapter 5, the feelings that appear to be linked with managing power are powerlessness, frustration, isolation, danger, threat, discomfort and depression.

Power is evidently a complex issue. The partnership working and emotion literatures reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 show that partnership working and emotion are also regarded as complex issues. Chapter 5 shows that several aspects of Sure Start are complex to manage: both tangible aspects, such as the staff team and the capital build, and intangibles such as identity, power and communication. Methodological and related literature reviewed in chapter 4 suggested that the use of stories and discussion could be an appropriate way to explore complex issues and environments (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:41, Sims 2004:158), and also showed that complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty are closely linked (Melucci 1996:2). It is interesting, therefore, to see in chapter 5 that the management of complex issues by Sure Start managers, as explored through stories and discussion, does appear to lead to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty.

Chapter 5 also showed that complexity can lead to problems in communication. The academic and policy partnership literature suggests that communication is an essential aspect of partnership working (e.g. Doherty and Harland 2001:115, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:100–101, GOSE 2003:14). This is supported by the data for this research. Like power, communication was discussed at length by all three groups of Sure Start managers. Its management appears to be particularly

complex in partnership settings, and seems to be linked with feelings of joy and frustration.

The MSM provides an opportunity to see twelve Sure Start managers communicating in practice. They were all skilled communicators, listening carefully, questioning each other for clarification or to explore issues, talking fluently, rarely interrupting or speaking over each other, with only one factual misunderstanding in all the hours of data construction. Observation over the last five years indicates that this degree of skill in communicating is common to the vast majority of Sure Start managers. Yet the MSM participants still find that managing communication within a partnership is complex and challenging, particularly when so much of that communication is mediated by technology and the vast array of written information produced by national and local government.

Clear communication seems to be particularly important, and particularly difficult, when faced with conflicting agendas – also discussed at length by each group. Conflicting agendas are highlighted in the partnership literature as a potential barrier to partnership working. The emotion literature shows that they are also an issue in organisations, where there may be conflict between hidden and visible agendas. Gabriel suggests that conflicting agendas are a particular issue in what he calls a 'flexible organisation' where jobs are integrated, overlapping and multi-skilled (2003:171). Sure Start partnerships seem to have many similarities with Gabriel's 'flexible organisation'. A Sure Start partnership may appear very similar to a traditional organisation in that it has a manager and staff, unified objectives for service provision, an internal hierarchy, bureaucratic controls, and is accommodated in one or more dedicated buildings. However, the data has shown that the controls on Sure Start managers are not primarily bureaucratic, as Gabriel suggests they would be in a traditional organisation. Drawing on Gabriel's suggestions, it is possible to identify other controls that have a significant impact on Sure Start managers, e.g. cultural controls (*'we've also got to do this whole thing about respecting the particular cultures of families and communities that may not actually mesh'*¹), emotional controls (*'you're not really allowed to bring the*

¹ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 458–460.

*crisis bits to the table really when you're out doing any strategic developments*²), structural controls (*'we have to be accountable and achieve certain targets and objectives and so on*³), technological controls (*'with such efficient communication processes now, there's so much information, and yet we're not better informed*⁴) and spatial controls (*'we're a team which is around 40, it's an enormous amount of people to keep in mind and keep in touch with, really, who are spread across a wide area and about five different locations*⁵). This range of controls in itself is likely to create conflicting agendas.

The data shows that conflicting agendas can occur at all levels from the macro to the micro. Pam's initial story of Princess Susan demonstrates the macro level of conflict between the national social policy agenda and the local partnership working agenda. Luke's initial story demonstrates the micro level of conflict between the agendas of an upset parent and a visiting dignitary. Both stories clearly demonstrate how difficult it is for Sure Start managers to manage such conflicting agendas. Chapter 5 suggests that this leads to feelings of desire, frustration, discomfort, powerlessness, space, distance and separation.

The emotion literature suggests that one way conflicting agendas can be managed is through performance, i.e. choosing what to hide and what to display, to manage both the agendas themselves and the emotions of oneself and others (e.g. Freund 1999, Shields 2002). Two of the three MSM groups discussed performance at length. The interpretation of this data shows that the performances of Sure Start managers go further than the hiding/revealing dichotomy of Hochschild's (1983) conception of emotional labour, requiring a huge emotional range to draw on to be convincing. Chapter 5 suggests that, as for many performers, this is linked with feelings of excitement and fear.

The emotion literature suggests that choosing what to hide and what to reveal in personal performances leads to emotional tension (Hochschild 1983, Putnam and Mumby 1993). The partnership literature indicates that tensions are rife in

² Discussion of Luke's story, lines 205–206.

³ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 457–458.

⁴ Discussion of Sadie's story, lines 356–357.

⁵ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 412–414.

partnership working (Newman 2001, Ling 2002). Chapter 5 showed that Sure Start managers do indeed have to manage many tensions, and suggested that this is linked with feelings of fear and frustration.

There are just two positive emotions that appear to be linked with management of Sure Start partnerships: joy and excitement. Frustration is the emotion most commonly experienced, being apparently linked with four of the eight main themes discussed above. This is not surprising in the context of the partnership literature, as frustration has been linked with partnership there (e.g. Huxham and Vangen 2005:174). In fact all the concepts and emotions discussed above are featured in the academic literature, even those that are not included in the reviews in chapters 2 and 3. For example, social engineering and partnership working were recently discussed in the context of early years' education in New Zealand (Lee 2005:63) and the history of child adoption in America (Balcom 2006:223), as well as closer to home as part of a debate about the relationship between social science and government in the UK (Hodgkinson 2000).

Taken individually, as above, the main themes explored by this research may appear neat, separate, categorised, yet still intimately linked to the literatures that spawned them. What I have not found in the partnership literature or the emotion literature is an exploration of the emotional experience of managers in partnership settings. Taking a more holistic view of the research enabled me to begin this process. Bringing together the themes from the literature with some of the emotions expressed in the data has begun to create an outline, suggesting that Sure Start managers may need access to a wider range of emotions than the literature on emotion in the workplace would lead one to expect for organisational managers. Addressing the research questions should begin to fill in the picture.

How do Sure Start Managers Manage their own Feelings and Emotions?

The literature on social and professional emotional labour focuses mostly on identifying, describing and measuring aspects of emotional labour and management. The question 'How is emotion management done?' seems to be asked rarely, if ever. But there are some clues in this and other bodies of

literature. We have seen from the partnership literature reviewed in chapter 2 that effective management in partnership settings requires the use of discretion and judgement. These are presented in that literature as cognitive functions.

However, literature from many disciplines asserts the inextricable link between emotion and cognition (Callahan and McCollum 2002:9, Bechara 2004:30). We have also seen in chapter 3 that context plays a central role in emotion management. It seems likely that Sure Start managers manage their own feelings and emotions by identifying and analysing their feelings, in context, and making judgements, using their own discretion, about what to express as emotions and when and how. It would be interesting to investigate the extent to which feelings and emotions are drawn upon in Sure Start managers' judgements as a whole, and – albeit with Children's Centre managers or other similar professionals – this might be a fruitful area for future research.

Much of the recent emotion literature emphasises the role of 'feeling rules', i.e. the explicit or implicit rules that dictate the required or permissible expression of emotion in given situations, in emotion management. In some organisational contexts there are explicit feeling rules, such as the flight attendants who are required to look cheerful by smiling at all times (Hochschild 1983:7) and the call centre operators who are supposed to express warmth, cheerfulness and good nature in their voices throughout every call (Bunting 2004:62–63). This is what Bolton, in her typology of workplace emotion management, calls 'pecuniary emotion management', i.e. the management of emotion for commercial gain (2005:94). She puts forward three other types of workplace emotion management: 'prescriptive emotion management', which is the management of emotion to fit a pre-existing professional or organisational identity; 'presentational emotion management', or the management of emotion to fit a pre-existing social identity; and 'philanthropic emotion management', a subset of presentational emotion management denoting the management of emotion to give more than is necessary in a particular situation (ibid:95–98).

Sure Start managers are not subject to pecuniary emotion management: there are no explicit feeling rules in their job descriptions, and their role is not to increase an employer's profit margin. It could be argued that they are not subject to

prescriptive emotion management, either, because the profession of Sure Start manager is so new that it has not had time to develop a recognisable set of emotional behaviours for people to fit into. Alternatively, however, they could be held to be subject to prescriptive emotion management, because they are managers in social care settings and are therefore required to behave like other such managers. The present research supports this by showing that there may be some implicit feeling rules for Sure Start managers. For example, in discussion of Luke's story Elaine says that when a manager is dealing with a crisis in their own partnership, but they're attending an external meeting, *'you're not really allowed to bring the crisis bits to the table really'*⁶. Her use and repetition of the word 'really' suggests some uncertainty about the implicit rule she's trying to articulate, i.e. that people at external meetings do not want to know about internal problems, however trying they may be; they want to focus on the agenda issues and get the business done. This may, therefore, be a partial rather than an absolute rule. However, there also appear to be some absolute rules. For example, in discussion of Patrick's story, where the 'poor wretch' stands for the Sure Start manager, Amy says *'The poor wretch isn't allowed to be an irritant and lose their temper'*⁷, and Pam and Rebecca agree. This indicates an implicit feeling rule that Sure Start managers have to keep their tempers at all times. In the same discussion, Patrick says *'I suppose the poor wretch had a feeling in the end that he had to be all things to all people'*⁸. This indicates an implicit feeling rule that Sure Start managers must meet all demands made of them in the course of their work. And in discussion of Rebecca's story, Pam speaks of *'having to switch between the registers all the time'*⁹, which indicates that being able to access and use a wide range of emotional resources may be an implicit feeling rule for Sure Start managers. (Pam's articulation is reminiscent of the concept of register put forward by Irvine (1990), as discussed in chapter 3.)

This is not an exhaustive list, because focusing on feeling rules alone may obscure the overall complexity of how it feels to work as a Sure Start manager. But it demonstrates that there are implicit feeling rules, which indicates that to

⁶ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 205–206.

⁷ Discussion of Patrick's story, line 237.

⁸ Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 418–419.

⁹ Discussion of Rebecca's story, lines 685–686.

some extent Sure Start managers may be subject to prescriptive emotion management.

This research suggests that Sure Start managers are also subject to the socially prescribed feeling rules of presentational emotion management and philanthropic emotion management. For example, in her initial story Amy introduces Mrs Grobbet (a character who, as demonstrated in discussion later, is analogous to a Sure Start manager) thus:

*Mrs Grobbet came to the bridge one day. She tickled the sproglets and made them laugh. She knew a good way to cut logs. They swapped pancake recipes and looked down at the cars together. Mrs Grobbet explained that she worked for the people.*¹⁰

Mrs Grobbet introduces herself by greeting the 'sproglets', or children, first, in a way that they receive with pleasure. She shares helpful information with the adults about a subject they had previously been discussing ('*she knew a good way to cut logs*'). She is willing to accept information from them as well as give it on another subject that was also under discussion before her arrival on the bridge ('*they swapped pancake recipes*'). They look at something, the cars, together. And only then does she reveal her professional identity. This seems a clear depiction of presentational emotion management as it is found in many social situations in our culture. For example, if a single adult joins a group it is acceptable for them to engage with the children before the adults, to join the existing conversation rather than impose a new one, and to give and take information as part of that conversation before revealing their own agenda. It could also be argued that there are philanthropic elements to Mrs Grobbet's emotion management, as she is willing to give plenty of time to the people on the bridge, and to engage with them in several different ways.

It appears that Sure Start managers are 'skilled emotion workers' who use a variety of ways to manage their feelings and emotions (Bolton 2005:85). The discussion of Sure Start managers' implicit feeling rules, above, points to one way

¹⁰ Amy's story, lines 40–43; see also appendix 4.

in which they may do this: by identifying the implicit feeling rules in operation in any given context, and then using their judgement about whether or not to comply with them. Some of these rules appear to be absolute: Sure Start managers must keep their tempers, meet all demands made of them, and be able to access and use a wide range of emotional resources. Of course the apparently absolute feeling rules are unlikely to be truly absolute. Experience of working with Sure Start managers shows that they do, on occasion, lose their tempers; that they cannot meet all demands made of them; and that they may not be able to access and use a wide range of emotional resources on every single occasion. In such instances they may need to rely more on their judgement and discretion, and less on their feelings. But some implicit feeling rules can *feel* absolute to participants, and this in itself necessitates emotional management.

Other implicit feeling rules appear to feel partial. Elaine's apparent uncertainty about the implicit feeling rule that people at external meetings do not want to know about internal problems, however trying they are, may indicate that while this rule applies in most circumstances, there could be exceptions. For example, experience of working with Sure Start managers indicates that this can be the case if the internal problems are particularly shocking and traumatic for the Sure Start manager, or if there is a link between the internal problems and the business of the external meeting. In either case the manager concerned may seek a limited amount of support from the other people at the meeting.

This suggests that Sure Start managers may be able to choose whether to use prescriptive or presentational/philanthropic emotion management. Even if an internal problem is traumatic and shocking for the individual manager and relevant to the business of an external meeting, so that it could be deemed appropriate to mention it in that meeting, the Sure Start manager may nevertheless choose whether to speak of it (presentational emotion management, seeking philanthropic emotion management from others) or not to speak of it (prescriptive emotion management). Conversely, Mrs Grobbet (see above) could have chosen to use little or no presentational/philanthropic emotion management with the people on the bridge, and instead she could have used prescriptive emotion management by

introducing herself immediately in her professional identity: 'Hello, I'm Mrs Grobbet and I work for the people.'

It is interesting that the choice made by Sure Start managers about which type of emotion management to use seems, to some extent at least, to be dictated by the prevailing power structure. We have seen that Sure Start managers are both strategic and operational, depending on where they are viewed from (chapter 5). It now appears that in a strategic role, when dealing with partnership staff and community members, a manager is more likely to use presentational/philanthropic emotion management, while in an operational role, when dealing with their own management and politicians, a manager is more likely to use prescriptive emotion management. Further investigation of links between emotion management types and power structures in the public sector could be an interesting area for future research. It might also be interesting to investigate other factors that influence managers' choices about which type of emotion management to use in particular situations.

So Sure Start managers seem to manage their own emotions and feelings by identifying implicit feeling rules and using their discretion to make judgements about whether or not to obey them, although their agency in this may be limited by a sense that some implicit feeling rules are absolute. They also appear to use their discretion to make judgements about whether to use prescriptive or presentational/philanthropic emotion management in different situations, although their agency here may be limited by the prevailing power structures in the public sector. There may, of course, be other ways in which Sure Start managers manage their own emotions and feelings, and it might be helpful to look at this in more detail in future research. But, in the meantime, what can the current research tell us about how Sure Start managers manage the emotions and feelings of others?

How do Sure Start Managers Manage Others' Feelings and Emotions?

Rafaeli and Worline suggest that the job of a manager is to control the emotions of 'multiple constituents who introduce multiple emotions which interact and influence

each other, often in unexpected ways' (2001:111). Although they are writing of emotions in organizations, they might easily have been describing the work of a manager in a public sector partnership such as Sure Start. Smith and Bryan found that Sure Start managers have to 'manage and contain' the anxieties of their team (2005:200). But they also have to manage, to a greater or lesser extent, the emotions of everyone they come into contact with.

As with management of their own emotions, the data suggest that Sure Start managers use a variety of ways to manage the feelings and emotions of others. One way is to listen, providing space for others to talk of what concerns them, even when this falls outside the usual professional sphere. For example, in his initial story Luke likened professional character types to characters from A A Milne's 'Winnie The Pooh' stories, with a Sure Start manager as Tigger and their line manager as Piglet. Elaine picked this up in the following discussion, speaking of supervision, theoretically a time when a Sure Start manager would be listened to by their line manager:

Elaine: Supervision for me is usually me supervising Piglet

(laughter)

Elaine: and spending most of the time hearing about Piglet's family and their achievements in Oxford University

(laughter)

Elaine: they are very interesting and slightly a long way from some of the other families I spend my time with when I'm actually in the programme, and their children's wonderful achievements as well.¹¹

Elaine's sarcasm – '*they are very interesting and slightly a long way from some of the other families...*' indicates that she is not impressed by her manager's discussion of personal issues, but she evidently chooses to use philanthropic emotion management to give her manager the space to speak of her '*family and their achievements*' in her supervision meetings. In discussion of Sadie's story, Bob also highlights the need to listen:

¹¹ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 213–225.

Bob: How do we communicate with each other, how we're feeling?

Joe: Yeah

Bob: You listen to what people say, don't you? It's not only the words they use, it's the way they put those words across...¹²

This suggests that there may be an emotionally intelligent aspect of Sure Start managers' listening skills, such that they take account of a variety of clues to the feelings behind '*what people say*'.

Sure Start managers also motivate people – and there is, of course, a very strong link between motivation and emotion.¹³ Joe's story was about three people building a cathedral: one motivated purely by money, one by job satisfaction and one by religious belief. In discussion of his story, Cath poses a question:

Cath: Did they work together or did they work differently as they were building the cathedral?

Joe: Good question.

Bob: Yeah.

Joe: I mean my own feeling is that somebody that needs, who needs to earn his keep, could do a pretty good job of building, somebody that's motivated purely by the vision may up and off if he feels that the final building's not going to match with his own visions, perhaps a mix of motivation is what's needed, I think it's part of working together for him.¹⁴

So despite the story Joe told which presented a kind of hierarchy of motives from money through craftsmanship to religious belief, in a partnership context he sees a need to recognise and acknowledge '*a mix of motivation*'. For Joe, someone who is motivated only by money may still do a good job, while someone motivated by belief may come into conflict with other beliefs and so not do the job at all. Fostering this '*mix of motivation*' seems to be part of the Sure Start manager's job. For example, in discussion of Luke's story, with reference to the Sure Start culture and ethos, Luke says he feels the need to keep all his staff '*feeling part of it and*

¹² Discussion of Sadie's story, lines 297–303.

¹³ See any issue of the journal *Motivation and Emotion* published by Springer Science+Business Media BV.

¹⁴ Discussion of Joe's story, lines 56–66.

*feeling in touch and feeling still stimulated about it and ... seeing themselves empowered and seeing themselves as valued and important in that*¹⁵. To do this with approximately 40 people working in various locations seems like a huge task of emotional management.

The example above is primarily about motivation of staff, but Sure Start managers also have to motivate members of local communities. For example, Elaine's initial story was about a group of pixies preparing for and hosting a visit from 'a very special person'¹⁶. In the following discussion, Simon asked Elaine whether the pixies in her story included 'parents and families and children as well as the staff'¹⁷. She replied that they did, and added 'And they might have been some of the more reluctant ones, because sometimes when you say somebody important's coming they say "well who are they?" and then you say "well they're important to me, and you're important to me, and you being there is important to me"¹⁸.' In Simon's response he commented that this was a way to 'get people on side', and Elaine agreed. Elaine's description of some people as 'more reluctant' than others suggests that some community members are more readily willing to become involved in such events than others. Experience of working with Sure Start supports this suggestion. And for Elaine, the way to involve local people is to manage their emotions by emphasising the personal relationship between the Sure Start manager and the person concerned in order to persuade them to become involved with the planned event.

Another way that Sure Start managers appear to manage the emotions of the people they come into contact with through their work, whether staff senior to them, staff junior to them or community members, is to mediate between people in dispute or conflict. Bob, in discussion of his own story, suggests that '*mediation is very good, if it comes in and gets people to stop playing games and acknowledge that actually winning the war is better than winning each battle*'¹⁹. He seems to be suggesting here that mediation can facilitate a shift in the direction of emotional commitment from the individuals involved.

¹⁵ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 419–422.

¹⁶ Elaine's story, line 11; see also appendix 4.

¹⁷ Discussion of Elaine's story, lines 223–224.

¹⁸ Discussion of Elaine's story, lines 234–237.

¹⁹ Discussion of Bob's story, lines 421–423.

As shown in chapter 2, the policy literature on partnership seems to try to give the impression that the act of forming partnerships will serve to reduce or eliminate power imbalances. The concept of 'mediation' carries similar overtones.

However, motivation is partly about controlling people. In discussion of Joe's story about building a cathedral, Bob extends the religious analogy to make this point:

Are you making a statement in the community that it's about bringing things into communities that they haven't already got, and giving them what we perceive they need, or, when I say 'we' I mean the collective 'we' that perceive the need, which was a bit like the Victorians building churches, wasn't it, they built the churches as a means to get the poor, in a sense, to come in and understand what religion was all about, and control, I suppose, you can make that analogy about religion was control in one sense and are, what we're building, is it still a form of control? About social control: stop smoking, breastfeed, bring children up in a certain way, etcetera, all very positive things but you could see it as social control and social engineering.²⁰

Here Bob is evidently concerned about the social engineering aspect of Sure Start being potentially coercive. Later in the discussion of Joe's story Bob extends his own analogy of the Victorian philanthropist, as described in chapter 5. Victorian philanthropy focused on the 'deserving poor', defined as recipients who could use charitable gifts to help them become 'gainfully employed' and therefore move towards self-sufficiency rather than remaining dependent on the charity of others (Lees and Ralph 2004:152). This chimes with the approach of Sure Start, which had an objective to 'strengthen families and communities' by 'involving families in building the community's capacity to sustain the programme and thereby create pathways out of poverty' (DfES 2002:20). This was to be done by reducing the number of young children in Sure Start areas living in households with no breadwinner (ibid). There was an explicit suggestion that Sure Start partnerships should work with their local authority's Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to ensure accessible childcare for 0–3 year olds was as available in Sure Start areas as in other areas (ibid). By 2003, the Children's Centres start-up

²⁰ Discussion of Joe's story, lines 187–196.

guidance stated that the aim of providing childcare in disadvantaged areas was to 'help reduce child poverty by helping parents take up work' (Sure Start Unit 2003:31). Furthermore, this guidance had dropped the requirement to involve families, only saying that children's centres should 'develop/maintain links' with 'parents and community representatives' (ibid:24).

The parallels between Victorian philanthropy and religion, and Sure Start, are interesting because they indicate that despite the official rhetoric, Sure Start contains – and perhaps even, in some cases, perpetuates – many power imbalances and inequalities. It seems that Sure Start managers' emotional management of others may play a part in perpetuating these imbalances and inequalities at times. Chapter 5 demonstrated that some Sure Start managers are aware of this and are not happy about their own role within it.

So this research shows that Sure Start managers manage the feelings and emotions of those they come into contact with in the course of their work through listening to people, motivating people and mediating between people. Once again, this is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but it demonstrates that Sure Start managers do indeed use a variety of ways to manage the feelings and emotions of others. The research also demonstrates that this appears to be linked with structural power in the form of social control.

How do Sure Start Managers Navigate Through the Complex, Ambiguous and Uncertain Emotional Experiences of Partnership Working?

Traditionally, work and workers were regarded as not having emotions (Rafaeli and Worline 2001:97, Davies 2003:197). Perhaps partly as a result of this, there has been little research on emotion at work as experienced by workers (Briner 1999:329). Most of the existing research is based on data from organisations in the private sector, which may evoke different feelings and emotions in their managers from those evoked by public sector partnerships such as Sure Start (Miller, Hoggett and Mayo 2006:5–6).

It is now generally accepted that work is far from emotion-free (e.g. Fineman 1993, Briner 1999, Rafaeli and Worline 2001, Bolton 2005, Miller, Hoggett and Mayo 2006). The prevailing view today seems to be that emotion is an intrinsic, integral part of human beings and therefore of the workplace. For Rafaeli and Worline, 'emotion is what connects people to one another, and to organisations' (2001:110). Although most people have a level of control over the emotions they express, nobody can go to work without their feelings: they cannot be taken out and left by the door, like false teeth in a glass, to be put back in at the end of the working day. The findings of this research support this view, showing that the emotional life of a Sure Start manager at work is pervasive, varied and dynamic.

Over 100 emotions were named by Sure Start managers during the MSM sessions (see appendix 8 for the full list). And underlying feelings can be deduced from the emotions named in the data. For example, anxiety seemed to be widely felt by members of all three groups. No participant used the words 'anxious' or 'anxiety' at any point, but in 11 out of the 12 stories and discussions participants used words like 'worried' and 'uncertainty'. These words represent the emotions, i.e. the managers' emotional experience translated into language in a specific context (chapter 3). Simply from knowledge of human emotions and feelings, it is possible to deduce that the underlying feeling beneath an expression of worry and/or uncertainty is most likely to be anxiety. Emotion research supports this deduction with findings that anxiety is a common emotion in everyday life. For example, Scherer *et al*, in a study of the emotional experience of over one thousand people in everyday settings including the workplace, found that anxiety was the third most commonly experienced emotion after happiness and anger (2004:516). Situations and issues identified by Sure Start managers that caused them to express worry or uncertainty, and therefore probably to feel anxiety, included: not being able to meet the needs of communities; defeatism; emergencies; inability to control planned events or people's inputs; inability to manage differing perceptions/viewpoints; whether their own perceptions and viewpoints were accurate; general uncertainty about the future with the advent of children's centres; specific concerns about how to deliver services of consistent range and quality to more people with less funding; inability to do a good job within the timescales demanded of them; minor mistakes they had made; trying to manage

aspects of their job, e.g. a sizeable building programme, without sufficient expertise; potential impermanence of their own jobs, and what they might be able to do instead.

There may be many other feelings that were not named as emotions by Sure Start managers but could be identified through analysis of the data. However, it is not the intention of this research to try to catalogue all the feelings a Sure Start manager may experience in the course of their work. The example of anxiety is intended as an illustration to show the relationship between participants' emotions and feelings as defined for the purposes of this thesis (chapter 3). We know from the data interpretations in chapters 5 and 6 that the work-related emotional life of a Sure Start manager is complex, and working towards a taxonomic classification of the individual feelings underlying participants' expressions of emotion could obscure this complexity.

This research has demonstrated that Sure Start managers need ready access to a wide range of emotional responses for use at a moment's notice in the course of their work. Pam and Luke gave the clearest indications of how it feels to work in such a complex professional and emotional environment – but it does not feel the same for each of them. Pam reported experiencing it as '*swinging between the two poles*' of feeling '*fantastic*' and '*very depressing*'²¹. To Luke, it felt less like two ends of a spectrum and more like a multi-layered experience with an '*emotional pull at absolutely every single level*'²². The data interpretation in chapters 5 and 6 shows that Sure Start managers may experience a great variety of emotional experiences in the course of their work, from joyful to despairing, confident to uncertain, enthusiastic to disillusioned, sometimes with several emotions being experienced together. This raises questions such as 'Does the emotional life of Sure Start managers at work differ from their emotional life elsewhere, and, if so, how?'

There are some pointers in the existing literature on how it feels to be a manager in a social care setting. Davies identifies a prevalent feeling among such

²¹ Discussion of Pam's story, lines 278–283.

²² Discussion of Luke's story, line 333.

managers of being 'caught in the middle' of 'tension and conflict both with those above them and with those below them in the hierarchy' (2003:189). We have seen that Sure Start managers are in a 'middle' position (see appendix 1), leaving them unsure of whether they are operational or strategic staff, as shown in chapter 5. There are many illustrations of how this feels in the stories and discussions of the MSM participants. For example, in Pam's initial story, Princess Susan (who later discussion shows to be analogous to a Sure Start manager) is caught between the demands of the king and his ministers and the resistance of the villagers, and this is so emotionally demanding that she retreats to her lonely tower and cries. In Cath's initial story, Mother Rabbit (also shown in discussion to be analogous to a Sure Start manager) is caught between the demands of the ponies and the mysterious order-giver above them, and the needs of the little animals and insects in her forest glade. It is clear from the following discussion that, in emotional terms, she is caught between the happiness of the glade as it stands and the potential unhappiness of it being taken over by the ponies. And in his initial story, Luke tells of the manager who is caught between the demands of the visiting dignitary and the distressed local parent, and then expands on this in the discussion by telling an experience story about the situation as part of a group story; for him it felt 'awful'²³. In discussion of Patrick's story, where the 'poor wretch' stands for the Sure Start manager, Amy says '*the poor wretch catches it both ways, working with the baying crowd and sort of piercing that self-satisfaction that's impenetrable*'²⁴. The 'self-satisfaction' refers to people described by Amy as '*enthusiastic impressive initiative workers*'²⁵ who speak in rhetoric and see attending meetings and producing paperwork as significant achievements. In doing so they make demands on Sure Start managers that those managers consider to be unnecessary or unhelpful, yet find hard to contest or 'pierce' because those workers are so 'impenetrable'.

Some of the existing literature focuses on how it feels to work as a manager in an environment of rapid change, as for the Sure Start managers when the MSM sessions took place. Callahan and McCollum suggest that emotion is linked to change, pointing out that the etymological root of the word 'emotion' is the Latin

²³ Discussion of Luke's story, line 282.

²⁴ Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 414–415.

²⁵ Discussion of Patrick's story, line 408.

'*movere*', meaning 'to move' (2002:17). Smith and Bryan identify anxiety as one common feeling for Sure Start managers in this situation (2005:201) and, as shown above, the participants in this research were no exception. For Smith and Bryan, the process of rapid change in a partnership environment elicits complex emotions that have to be carefully navigated (ibid:206). And change does not only cause emotion; emotion also causes change, and they coexist in a reflexive loop (Huy 1999:328–9). A complex emotional landscape has also been found to be a feature of everyday life (Ben-Ze'ev and Revhon 2004:583) and so careful navigation would also be required in many non-work situations. So it may be that the emotional life of Sure Start managers is, to some extent at least, similar to their overall emotional life. Whether people working as managers in social care feel similarly 'caught in the middle' in other areas of their lives, or whether people working as Sure Start/Children's Centre managers feel a similar level of anxiety in other areas of their lives, would be interesting to investigate.

Considering the thematic analysis in chapter 5 in the light of Bolton's typology of emotion management (above), it appears that Sure Start managers will use presentational/philanthropic emotion management when they are in contact with members of local communities, and prescriptive emotion management when they are at meetings with external professionals. The data also suggest that at times in the working lives of Sure Start managers there are simultaneous drivers for both prescriptive and presentational/philanthropic emotion management, which causes tension and internal conflict. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from the discussion of Fred's story.

Elaine: and at a meeting where you feel you need to be, have a slower pace and be nurturing and caring, but you're going 'oh no' and looking at your watch because you know what you've got to do next or what's happened that morning when you got a phone call. And you can sort of show bad behaviour yourself at times really. (inaudible)

Simon: I can definitely, definitely agree with what you're saying. [gives a similar example from his own experience] That I've seen very much myself, especially over the summer period when I had hardly any time in our town at all, that I was literally just 'OK, this one needs to be done, this is the next step, da da da da, da

da da, da da da', all of the time, and it was only afterwards when I was driving back, thinking 'my god'.

Elaine: I know, you start speaking to people like that.

Simon: Yeah. (inaudible) running behind, saying 'come on, let's do the next thing', and it's just pfft

Elaine: But also perhaps noticing that members of staff are stressed and maybe overworked and it's just bang bang bang bang bang because there isn't that. [sic] and then my very worst is arriving at a meeting late and leaving early,

Simon: Yeah

Elaine: And knowing I've watched people doing that and thinking 'who the hell do they think they are'

Simon: That's so rude, isn't it? Yeah.

Elaine: and then thinking 'oh it's me!'

Simon: Yeah, absolutely

Elaine: it's me today (laughs)²⁶

It seems that the tension between prescriptive and presentational/philanthropic emotion management is at its greatest in meetings where *'you feel you need to be, have a slower pace and be nurturing and caring'*, and where *'members of staff are stressed and maybe overworked'*. Experience of working with Sure Start managers suggests that meetings requiring a 'slower pace' and more 'nurturing and caring' are likely to be those involving community members and/or staff from the Sure Start partnership (who are by definition junior to the manager), rather than those involving external professionals who are more likely to be peers of, or senior to, the manager. The repetition of 'be' in Elaine's first sentence is interesting, suggesting that 'being' may have a higher priority than 'doing' in this context.

For Elaine, letting prescriptive emotion management take precedence over presentational/philanthropic emotion management constitutes *'bad behaviour'*. Simon agrees that from the viewpoint of presentational/philanthropic emotion management, prescriptive emotion management is *'rude'*. Both Simon and Elaine

²⁶ Discussion of Fred's story, lines 375–416.

recognise and acknowledge the tension in trying to manage both at once. This is another kind of conflicting agenda that partnership managers have to manage.

Bolton does full justice to the complexity of emotional life and emotion management within organisations, acknowledging that emotional labour crosses boundaries – ‘self and society, private and public, formal and informal’ – and that people manage their emotions at work in many different ways (2005:163). She also acknowledges potential tensions between pecuniary and presentational/philanthropic emotion management (ibid:100) and between pecuniary and prescriptive emotion management (ibid:128). But she does not explore the way these tensions may be experienced by individuals, identify potential tensions between prescriptive and presentational/philanthropic emotion management, discuss the need for people to manage their emotions in different ways at the same time, or describe the apparent internal conflict and tension that results. As Bolton focuses on organisations and writes primarily (although not exclusively) of the private sector, tensions between prescriptive and presentational/philanthropic emotion management may be a specific feature of managing public sector partnerships, and it would be interesting to investigate this further in future research.

So the emotional experience of Sure Start managers is very complex and varied, with a minefield of implicit and socially prescribed feeling rules to navigate through. As we have seen, within this emotional environment, Sure Start managers have to manage their own emotions and feelings, and to some extent those of other people as well. The research suggests that they navigate through the minefield skilfully and creatively, using all the resources at their disposal. But how do they make sense of all this complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty?

How do Sure Start Managers Make Sense of their Emotional Experiences?

We have now seen that the work-related emotional life of a Sure Start manager is very complex, and that Sure Start managers use a variety of methods to manage their own emotions and feelings, and those of the other people they encounter, in work settings. Given this, it is surprising that emotion seems to be almost

completely disregarded in the professional context for Sure Start managers. This seems particularly incongruous as they are managing a service designed to improve opportunities for disadvantaged families with children under the age of five. That is an emotive subject that everyone can feel some identification with, if not through having children in their own families then through having been children themselves. And this research has shown that Sure Start managers do experience and manage a wide range of emotions and feelings in the course of their work. This research shows that language, and its interpretation and translation, plays a key role in enabling Sure Start managers to make sense of their emotional experience of their complex, ambiguous and uncertain workplaces. This seems to apply particularly to the everyday stories that Sure Start managers tell and hear. I suggest that, as seen in the MSM discussions, Sure Start managers routinely tell and listen to each other's stories as a way of making sense of their work-related emotional experiences. I aim to demonstrate this below.

Examination of Sure Start managers' job descriptions shows that they frequently require such attributes as 'good interpersonal skills', 'the ability to build and develop relationships' and 'negotiating skills' which, it could be argued, would all include a component of emotional skill and/or intelligence. But there was no specific reference to emotion, emotional skill or emotional intelligence in any of the job descriptions studied. Government documents about Sure Start emphasise the need to promote the emotional development of children aged 0–5, but say nothing about the emotional needs of adults, whether community members, workers, managers or other partners. This may imply that the emotional labour of Sure Start managers is done by telling and listening to stories in 'spaces that are unmanaged and unmanageable' (Gabriel 2003:176). These sound like the spaces described by Pam and Patrick from the Shire group, in discussion of Rebecca's story, as '*the nether regions*' where Pam said people were '*subversive*' and '*just carried on in their own sweet way anyway because they felt that that was the best way round things*'²⁷.

One possibility is that emotion is disregarded in the professional context because there is no professional language for the expression of emotion. There are many

²⁷ Discussion of Rebecca's story, lines 450 and 501–502.

different professional languages, as Luke explains in the concluding part of an experience story he tells during the discussion of his own initial story:

Luke: sometimes people have a real go at you because they're feeling very insecure and uncomfortable about a bulge somewhere else in the system, and again it's that literacy thing, it's having to be, speak voluntary services, speak PCT²⁸, speak local authority, speak social services, speak you name it,

Fred: absolutely, yeah

Luke: you have to have that range of, you need at least a sprinkling of, enough to order a sandwich and a beer basically, enough to get through to be able to get yourself to the table for people just not to be absolutely foul to you, sometimes, and sometimes people are absolutely foul to you, and you have to take it on the chin and go away, and then next time you go back something's changed, they've moved on a bit.²⁹

Luke makes an interesting link between the partnership professional's need to speak several professional languages, to at least a basic level, and emotion management. For him, professional linguistic ability can help to prevent people being 'absolutely foul'. He admits that nevertheless sometimes people are 'absolutely foul', which has an impact that the manager has to take 'on the chin and go away' without making a fuss or being 'absolutely foul' themselves. This seems to be an example of philanthropic emotion management. And this can have a positive effect, because Luke does not expect the manager to have the same experience in the next encounter with those people – although he does not attribute this directly to the manager's response. For him this process is 'about developing those, I think it's all about relationships, it takes a long time, I think, to develop those relationships to their different levels across the piece really.'³⁰

In discussion of Sadie's initial story, as part of a group story about communication mediated by technology and Government information, Joe points out how the proliferation of professional languages can be offputting to community members:

²⁸ Primary Care Trust

²⁹ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 538–549.

³⁰ Discussion of Luke's story, lines 549–551.

*Joe: In our area we see this new all-singing, all-dancing district centre, which our parents said 'no, we don't want to be involved with that, we'll do our own thing' because it had reached the stage where it was a Tower of Babel in some respects, there were so many languages being spoken, so many different ideas about the way it would all look, it was an impossible future, it would seemingly never get built, never ever get finished.*³¹

When Joe says '*there were so many languages being spoken*' he is not referring to actual community languages: his area's population was almost exclusively white British. He is referring to professional languages, and demonstrating that the complexity of partnership working, including the different languages spoken, can be so alienating to local community members that they do not want anything to do with a facility that is ostensibly being created for their benefit.

In discussion of Patrick's initial story, as part of a group story about different languages used within and around Sure Start, Amy points out the difference between professional and community language:

*Amy: I liked the bit about the whole of the language of this crew of people, that peculiar partnership language about progressing initiatives, full of jargon, full of, you know, the major players, the auditing of the different factors of it, it's completely divorced from the baying crowd and its language outside the door, very satisfactory in the way that they all speak and all understand and all commend themselves, congratulate themselves on being, but maybe not the language of the crowd, the mob ... [interjection from Patrick] But the language of the poor wretch, who had to stand and face the baying mob, had to go back to words like 'wait, have patience', and those sort of words, that aren't the same as that language in the closed session.*³²

Here again we see the '*poor wretch*' caught in the middle, between the self-congratulatory professionals meeting behind closed doors and the '*baying mob*' outside. The Sure Start manager needs to be able to speak the '*peculiar*

³¹ Discussion of Sadie's story, lines 380–385.

³² Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 176–192.

partnership language ... full of jargon' and the community's personal language. Miller, Hoggett and Mayo also identify the dynamic that Patrick and Amy outline, describing it as 'the emotional demands of being on the receiving end of community or citizen anger' (2006:8).

Sure Start managers from the Borders group depicted themselves as being comfortable speaking with community members while other professionals are not. For example, in discussion of Elaine's initial story, Luke and Elaine describe the difficulties faced by two other professionals:

Luke: There was a presentation by the IRT³³ people, the information referral and tracking thing, and I asked the person who was delivering it afterwards how it had gone for them, how did they feel it went, and the first thing they said was 'well yeah I found it a bit difficult with having parents in the room, because I possibly wouldn't have said, I didn't feel able to say some of the things I would have done otherwise'.

Elaine: Yeah, we had that last week, Beacon status, the Director of Social Care said to me 'are the parents coming in for the first bit? Are they going to sit through my presentation?' and I was like 'yeah,' I said 'they're on the Board, they're Board members'. It's still that big huge divide. I actually said to him 'they're used to sitting through boring meetings'.

(laughter)

Elaine: He understood. I said 'they'll be fine for your presentation, love.'

(laughter)³⁴

Luke's description of the IRT presentation forms the end of a performance story, which Elaine immediately follows with another performance story. She demonstrates how she used presentational/philanthropic emotion management to try to bridge the '*big huge divide*' between the Director of Social Care and the parents from her Sure Start partnership, using humour to imply that the Director's presentation would be boring but that the parents would sit through it without complaint because '*they're used to sitting through boring meetings*'. As we have

³³ 'Information, referral and tracking' refers to a Government initiative to create and promote systems of sharing data between children's services.

³⁴ Discussion of Elaine's story, lines 515–532.

seen, prescriptive emotion management is customarily used by Sure Start managers to manage the emotions of their superiors, so this is a daring step. That seems to be recognised by the laughter of the other participants (which sounds slightly shocked and incredulous in the recording) and Elaine's statement of reassurance that '*he understood*' and that she was also able to reassure him, albeit again depicted with a humorous edge, that the parents would be '*fine*' for his presentation.

These performance stories again show the Sure Start manager being 'caught in the middle' between the professional and the parents. There is no depiction of other professionals speaking to parents directly about their preferences, wishes or needs. The implication is that non-Sure Start professionals and local parents speak different languages and cannot understand each other without a Sure Start manager to mediate, interpret and translate.

At another point in the discussion of Elaine's initial story, as part of a group story about the joy of maintaining contact with service users, she and Simon describe how parents will challenge Sure Start managers if they do not understand what they say:

Elaine: I think when you go into that more strategic level, that you can sit in a room and there are 15 people and they have just lost touch, and we all know, we see that with our politicians, we remember that when people lose touch with the real agenda, and you can just see that with your colleagues, and I think the joyous thing about our job is that we just don't have the privilege of losing touch with

Simon: No, absolutely, because you have a rude awakening

Elaine: Yeah.

Simon: when you go up to the parents' room and say 'how are you?' and it's not like that at all

Elaine: Absolutely. Yeah. 'What are you talking about?' Yeah. 'What are you talking about? What did you mean then?'

*Simon: Yeah.*³⁵

³⁵ Discussion of Elaine's story, lines 551–568.

This suggests that there may be times when Sure Start managers use the wrong language for the context, e.g. speaking in professional language when parents are present or vice versa. The Shire group, in discussion of Patrick's initial story, suggest that there is a risk of Sure Start managers becoming too closely identified with their professional personas:

Patrick: I think at the end as well there was a danger that the poor wretch would be sucked in to

Amy: Ah!

Patrick: the language of the

Pam: Oh yes

Rebecca: yes

Amy: That's an interesting

Patrick: The language and the ethos of the working groups, or whatever, and I suspect that he'd have to be very very thoughtful and insightful to make sure that he can do both.³⁶

This segment of a group story, about the powerlessness of a Sure Start manager caught between conflicting agendas, demonstrates the potential difficulty of balancing the '*language and the ethos*' of the professionals with the local community's equivalent. Experience of working with Sure Start managers, as well as the data quoted above, suggests that there may be situations in which either more than one language needs to be spoken at the same time or a process of simultaneous translation is required. The literature supports this possibility while making clear that it is not specific to Sure Start or to partnerships. However, it may be a phenomenon experienced by many managers and leaders. Cooren and Fairhurst describe leadership as 'the art of translating' (2003:85). For them, 'sense-making processes can be understood as acts of translation' (ibid) – and therefore, presumably, vice versa. This is similar to Reddy's approach, discussed in chapter 3, in which speaking of emotion in order to make sense of it involves a form of translation, albeit incomplete and indeterminate (Reddy 2001:95). This opens up the possibility of internal translation, from the unspoken to the spoken, as well as external translation between people in the sense-making process. It

³⁶ Discussion of Patrick's story, lines 419–435.

also demonstrates the three-way link between language, emotion and meaning (see figure 1 in the Introduction).

The need for multiple languages to be spoken and/or translated for sense-making is likely to lead to tensions for the Sure Start manager that can be difficult to resolve. For example, as Simon points out in discussion of Fred's story, Sure Start managers, like community members, can find themselves at meetings where *'people are using language and terminology that you're not familiar with'*³⁷. Interestingly, the MSM itself seemed to provide a possible partial resolution of this dilemma for Amy, who said *'I think your story, Patrick, gives me some language I can use...'*³⁸. Luke also suggested that the creation of a new language was part of the role of Sure Start managers. In discussion of Simon's initial story, as part of a group story about the relationships between Sure Start partnerships and the local authorities in the Borders area, Luke and Elaine were talking about the difficulties they experienced:

*Luke: I feel that the role that we're in as programme managers is not about service provision, it's about challenging and constantly attempting to change the process, and I feel the process has built a wall round itself to a certain extent, and become – it's even more subversive than that, because it's almost like they're talking our language, the language I have ownership of, that I feel that we've developed and brought to the organisation, you can hear those phrases trip off their lips, but not actually manufacturing change, it's about old wine in new bottles to a certain extent.*³⁹

Luke feels that the language of Sure Start belongs to him because he has been involved in its development. For him it seems to be closely linked with the ethos of Sure Start, and he is unimpressed by people who will turn the language into rhetoric by using it without adopting the ethos. Deetz describes the 'incorporation of new understandings of language and communication into our public discourse and social institutions' as 'one of the invisible struggles of our time' (2003:121); it is interesting that here a part, at least, of that struggle is made visible.

³⁷ Discussion of Fred's story, lines 309–310.

³⁸ Discussion of Patrick's story, line 406.

³⁹ Discussion of Simon's story, lines 413–420.

So Sure Start managers create new language, and use their managerial discretion and judgement to decide which language to speak in different situations. This is what Shotter and Cunliffe call 'practical authorship'. For them, practical authorship 'is not just about managing communication, but also creating meaning in a relationally responsive way' (2003:19). Meaning is created 'in the spontaneously coordinated interplay of people's responsive relations to each other' (ibid:17). Chapter 6 showed that meaning was created in this way through the telling of group stories during the MSM discussions. Various scholars of organisational life assert that storytelling is a method often used by managers and others to create shared meaning (e.g. Forester 1999:26, Hoggett 2000:136, Froggett 2002:138, Boje 2003:41). This suggests that, rather than the rarefied atmosphere of the MSM's 'transitional space' (Winnicott 1951, cited in Hoggett 2000:125) eliciting stories from Sure Start managers in discussion that would otherwise have remained untold, the managers brought their existing expertise in storytelling to the discussions and used their storytelling skills to create and share meaning in the same way as they would in other areas of their professional lives. In the context of this thesis, this demonstrates the three-way link between story, emotion and meaning (see figure 1 in the Introduction). It appears that meaning is created through a dialogic process of linguistic interpretation and reinterpretation in context (e.g. Bauman 1978:214, 230; Gergen 2001:viii, Patterson 2002:7, Currie and Brown 2003:564, Shotter and Cunliffe 2003:17). Within this process, storytelling by managers opens up new possibilities by creating 'an "imagined" from the many imaginaries', synthesising multiple inputs from multiple constituents into a coherent whole, to produce ways forward for meaning and action (Shotter and Cunliffe 2003:26–27). By doing this, managers help to create the identity of the organisation or partnership they work within (Currie and Brown 2003:564).

Practical authorship also has an effect on individual identity (Holman and Thorpe 2003:58). Chapter 2 showed that identity is complex, ambiguous and changeable. Chapter 3 showed that identity can be viewed as constructed through a process of continuous negotiation. Of course storytelling is not the only method that contributes to this process, but for Holman and Thorpe it plays a central role: 'Identity has a narrative character and the main way that we understand our

identities is through narrative' (ibid:61, see also Gergen 2001:vii). Work identity can have a profound effect on overall individual identity (Simpson and Smith 2005:2), and both identities are created and re-created through practical authorship (Currie and Brown 2003:563).

Stories do not only contribute to the creation of meaning and identity, they also serve to legitimate or resist existing structures of power (Currie and Brown 2003:579). This can be seen in all the stories told during the MSM sessions, whether initial stories or stories told in discussion: from Princess Susan's acceptance of the king's instructions even though they made her cry, to Pam and Patrick's discussion of the '*subversive*' nature of the '*nether regions*'. This last sounds like one of Gabriel's 'unmanageable spaces' (2003:176) that enable the development of complex identities. The MSM itself may also be such an unmanageable space. However, existing power structures have an inescapable impact on what can and cannot be told as stories, and on how stories may be told (Patterson 2002:5). So the prevailing power structure constrains the storytelling choices of Sure Start managers, just as it constrains the type(s) of emotion management they choose. This demonstrates the three-way link between power, language and emotion (see figure 1 in the Introduction). Froggett points out that 'the language of partnership can mask new forms of coercion' (2002:27). Storytelling in a partnership context, even in unmanageable spaces, may serve to reveal, support or oppose such new forms of coercion. The links between storytelling and power, in a partnership context, may be a fruitful subject for further research.

So the data interpretation demonstrates that Sure Start managers used stories to make sense of their emotional experiences during the MSM. It also showed that they were skilled at storytelling and story creation, which suggests that they use story in other arenas. The literature suggests that managers routinely use stories for practical authorship, identity management and engaging with power structures. This corroborates my original surmise, mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis and earlier in this chapter, that Sure Start managers tell and listen to each other's stories as a way of making sense of their work-related emotional experiences.

Most of the initial stories told in the MSM were fictionalised, if not outright fiction. However, even though the participants had been explicitly told that 'true' stories were not required (chapter 4), many of the stories told in discussion were told as if they were true. And, indeed, experience of working with some of the participants in other contexts confirms that some of the stories were firmly based on actual events – and therefore some or all of the others may also have been 'true'. But if they were not, does it matter? All seemed authentic to the MSM participants, as there were no challenges from any participant to the veracity of a story told in discussion. Perhaps it does not matter whether, for example, Elaine really did address the Director of Social Care as 'love', because in her recounting of the story, as discussed above, this aspect made a useful contribution. If a story is not true, it is not a lie: it is a fiction. And, as the next chapter will attempt to demonstrate, 'fictions are for making sense' (Hoggett 2000:131).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that drawing on both the partnership and emotion literatures for this analysis has enhanced the conceptualisations of some of the key themes found within those literatures. In particular, the complex conceptualisation of power, linked with the complex conceptualisation of emotional labour, offers a comparatively detailed picture of the relationship between power and emotion in a partnership setting.

This chapter has demonstrated that the emotional life of a Sure Start manager at work is pervasive, varied and dynamic. Sure Start managers seem to manage their feelings and emotions by identifying implicit feeling rules and using their discretion to make judgements about whether or not to obey them, although their agency in this may be limited by a sense that some implicit feeling rules are absolute. They also appear to use their discretion to make judgements about whether to use prescriptive or presentational/philanthropic emotion management in different situations, although their agency here may be limited by the prevailing power structures in the public sector.

This chapter has also showed that Sure Start managers manage the feelings and emotions of those they come into contact with in the course of their work through listening to people, motivating people and mediating between people. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but it demonstrates that Sure Start managers do use a variety of ways to manage the feelings and emotions of others. Managers' choices here again appear to be linked with structural power in the form of social control.

This chapter demonstrated that during the MSM Sure Start managers used stories to make sense of their emotional experiences. It also showed that they are skilled at storytelling and story creation, which suggests that they use story in other arenas too. The literature provides evidence that managers routinely use stories for practical authorship, identity management and engaging with power structures, which suggests that Sure Start managers are likely to use stories in these ways and perhaps others as well. The triad of three-way links between power, emotion and language; language, emotion, and meaning; and story, emotion and meaning (figure 1 – Introduction) has been strengthened and enlivened by focusing on their relationships in practice as well as their conceptual relationships. This will be discussed further in chapter 9.

Given the experience that led to this research, of Sure Start managers telling stories with emotional content in informal settings, it seems likely that they find ways to tell and listen to each other's stories as a way of making sense of their work-related emotional experiences. The next chapter tells a reflexive story of my own, in the hope of helping my readers make sense of my research-related emotional experiences.

Chapter Eight – Reflexivity

Introduction

This chapter is written to provide the reader with some insight into my experience of the research process. This links with Gadamer's interpretative approach as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, and builds on the reflexive background section of that chapter. The aim is to add to the picture some features of my pre-conceived ideas as I experienced them during the research (Gadamer 1975:237). This includes part of my emotional response to the process: relevant because of the subject matter, but proscribed elsewhere in the thesis by academic convention. The chapter also links with the wide and reflexive approach to triangulation described in chapter 4 (Bloor 1997:49): it is hoped that the chapter will provide more details for the reader, as they build a picture of this thesis in their own mind, to help in bringing it towards completion.

There is a long tradition of reflexivity in qualitative research and there are many different ways to approach it (Finlay 2002). The challenge I faced was to find a way that would fulfil the aim set out above, fit within the frame of the thesis – partnership, emotion, story, language – and include the central elements of my own experience. It could only be partial and contingent (ibid:212) and of the moment in which it was written (Doucet and Mauthner 2002:134). And it needed to fit within the spirit of this thesis that privileges authenticity over objective truth, shared meaning over divisive argument. Could I find a way?

The Whole Story

Polly Semic's eyeballs felt as if they were bonded to the computer screen. It had no words on.

How was she ever going to start this final chapter? She'd written the rest of her thesis in the accepted academic style, using the detached authorial voice,¹ and now she was supposed to put herself in the research so that readers could spot her assumptions and biases.² Reflexivity, it was called. Ridiculous concept; surely it couldn't be done.³ She'd been in the research all the way through, for years; thinking about it, dreaming about it, worrying about it, living it. How could she summarise that experience in a few thousand words?⁴

She rubbed painfully at her desiccated eyes, leaned her elbows on the desk and put her aching head in her hands.

'Oh god,' she said, 'this is awful.'

There was a soft 'pop' by her right ear and something landed on her shoulder. A night moth, perhaps. She brushed at it absently.

'Hey, watch out!' said a shrill voice, and a small figure jumped onto the desk.

Polly stared, amazed. A shimmering female humanoid, six inches high, hands on hips, stared right back at her. She rubbed her gritty eyes again, but when she opened them the creature was still there. It raised one eyebrow, waiting.

'Hallucinations. Great. That's all I need. Sod this, I'm going to bed.'

¹ Potter 1996:9.

² e.g. Cassell and Symon 1994:6, Denscombe 1998:212, Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:6.

³ e.g. Parker 1999:28, Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:6.

⁴ Finlay 2002:212.

‘Now wait a minute, dear,’ said the creature, blurring a little around the edges.
‘Don’t dismiss me as a hallucination or I’ll disappear again. I’m only here because you called me.’

‘I never did! How could I call you? I don’t even know who you are.’

‘I’m the Postgraduate Heavenly Deity,’ said the little female, preening. ‘Pohede for short.’

‘You’re *what?*’

‘Think of me as the goddess of doctoral students. Anyone writing a thesis who says ‘oh god’, I’m there. It’s a busy job, I can tell you.’

‘You’re a goddess? But I don’t believe in God!’

‘That’s OK, he’s got enough believers. Just don’t stop believing in me or I’ll disappear. I’m here to help you, dear. And, believe me, you’ve got a lot to learn.’

‘Don’t I know it,’ Polly said wearily.

Pohede perched on a fat book and arranged her pale green robes over her dainty knees. ‘Now, dear, what’s the problem?’

‘It’s this bloody reflexivity chapter. It’s doing my head in. I’ve spent nearly three years learning to erase every particle of my personality from my writing, and now suddenly I’ve got to put it all back in, but only in this one chapter. I wish they’d make their minds up. Am I supposed to hide myself or not?’⁵

‘Well, the academy likes it separate so it doesn’t threaten the validity of the rest of your work.’⁶

⁵ Perriton 2001:38.

⁶ Perriton 2001:42.

‘I’m not even dealing with validity,⁷ dammit!’

‘No, dear, of course you’re not,’ said Pohede soothingly. ‘But you need to stay within the recognised genres,⁸ don’t you?’

‘So they can judge me on their own terms. Not on mine. Because my terms don’t count.’

‘And what are your terms?’

‘I don’t KNOW! Because I’ve never had a chance to work them OUT!’

‘No need to shout, dear, I can hear you perfectly well. Do you want to define your own terms for judgement of your thesis? To see whether the academy takes any notice?’

Polly thought about it, her chin in her hands. ‘No. It would be too much work.’

‘Right. So you’ll need to use "their" terms, which means doing it "their" way.’

‘Even though I’m completely exasperated by being held fast in the power of the academy⁹.’

‘Yes. And those intimate links between power and knowledge¹⁰ must be particularly difficult for you with emotion as part of your subject.’

Polly’s head jerked up. ‘You know about that?’

‘Omniscient, that’s me.’ Pohede looked smug.

‘So how come you asked me what the problem is?’

⁷ See chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁸ Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:63, Davidson 2000:127.

⁹ Parker 1999:31.

¹⁰ Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:233.

‘Because I know you doctoral types, you work stuff out by talking about it. It’s no good me just telling you, dear. You have to learn it for yourself. But I can help you do that.’

‘I’m not sure there’s any point.’ Polly put her head in her hands again. ‘I stated that there must be an emotional appeal for me in the subject matter I’ve chosen.¹¹ I made it clear that I needed to use my own emotional experience to inform this study.¹² But there was still no space for me to express or use my feelings in a way that I chose. I’m beginning to wonder whether I should just give the whole thing up.’

There was a soft ‘pop’ by her left ear and something landed on her other shoulder.

‘Uh-oh. Now you’ve done it,’ said Pohede. ‘Here comes trouble.’

‘Darling, how simply lovely to see you again,’ said a squeaky voice, and a small male humanoid, six inches high, in a red and black pirate costume, jumped onto the desk and embraced Pohede. ‘Mwaah, mwaah, darling, it’s been so long. How are you, do tell? No, wait, can’t stop for small talk, job to do, despairing mortal to annex.’ He turned to Polly. ‘Oh *dear*, what have we got here? You’re not coping, are you?’

‘Who the hell are *you*?’ said Polly.

‘Quite right, very observant. I’m the Postgraduate Horrible Devil, but you may call me Pohode. I’m here to offer you a way out of all this. That’s what you want, isn’t it?’

‘Oh, yes, indeed I do. You don’t know how much I want that.’

¹¹ As shown in chapter 3

¹² As shown in chapter 3

‘Don’t insult me, mortal, I know everything.’ Pohode pulled something from his back pocket that looked like a tiny slide rule. ‘Wait till I check the calibrator... oh my badness, you do want it a lot, don’t you? That’ll be a Catholic upbringing then, judging by the guilt.’

Time to change the subject, thought Polly. ‘So are you two, like, brother and sister or something?’

Pohede looked pained. ‘I don’t know how you could even *think* such a thing.’

‘Ooh, get her! Me-ow! At least I know who my father was.’

‘Having Loki as your father is nothing to be proud of,’ said Pohede tartly. ‘Unlike my mother.’

Pohode rolled his eyes. ‘Don’t start with the sainted Athene routine. At least my father has a sense of fun.’

Pohede drew breath for a scathing reply, but Polly got in first. ‘If you two have come here to bicker, you can go and do it somewhere else. I’ve got a chapter to write and I’m very tired.’

Pohede looked shamefaced. Pohode grinned. ‘Tired, are you? Tired of the whole thing?’

‘Yes,’ said Polly. ‘Yes, I am. I’m tired to death of it. And you two aren’t helping one bit. What *are* you here for, anyway?’

‘He wants to help you quit,’ said Pohede.

‘Because I know that’s what you really want, and that’s what matters to me,’ said Pohode, with all the sincerity of an advertisement.

Pohede snorted. ‘Your quotas are what matter to you.’

‘Quotas?’ said Polly. ‘What quotas?’

‘We all have them,’ said Pohode. ‘The number of mortals we influence. They go to make up our league tables.’

‘League tables?’

‘Oh do stop repeating everything we say, it’s terribly tedious. If I wanted a parrot I’d get one to go with the outfit,’ said Pohode. ‘Everyone has league tables these days, don’t they? The big guys always get the top spots, and we jockey for position further down. Some of us,’ he looked maliciously at Pohode, ‘further down than others.’

‘It’s so unfair,’ complained the little goddess. ‘Just because they count the people you talk out of doing doctorates before they even start. What about the people I talk into doing them?’

‘Only counts if they see it through. Dear.’

‘Hang on a minute,’ said Polly. ‘Neither of you talked me into doing this PhD.’

The little figures lounging on her desk shared a complicit smile.

‘Remember when your friend told you about how to find the right supervisor? And you were so nervous when you made that first phone call to her?’ asked Pohode. ‘I was right there at your elbow.’

Pohode chuckled. ‘Remember how your first attempt got completely derailed?’ Polly gasped. ‘And when your partner pointed out how stressful it would be for you both? That was me.’ He sighed. ‘He is much easier to influence than you are.’

‘Really?’ said Pohode, smirking. ‘I wouldn’t have said that, myself.’

Pohode scowled. 'Don't get uppity, Your Heavenly Deity.'

'Well, look at it this way, with some of my help and a lot of her own effort Polly's got this far. Of course it's difficult, but she'd be crazy to give up now and waste all that work.'

'But I'm so stuuuuuuck,' wailed Polly. 'I can't see how I'm ever going to get started with this chapter. Suddenly I have to do everything differently. These stupid academic writing conventions, they make it all so artificial.'¹³

'Writing is always artificial,'¹⁴ said Pohode gently. 'What's really troubling you?'

Polly drew a trembling breath. 'What I think, and more to the point, what I feel, has been completely marginalised in the context of this research over the last few years. Even by me. I should have kept more notes about it. But I've bought in to this whole academic cognitive thing that I don't believe in. It's been like a process of assimilation, and I – I just don't want to be assimilated.'¹⁵ A tear slid down the side of her nose and she wiped it away. 'I guess I thought that at doctoral level there would be more scope for individuality. But then I've been reading a lot about reduction of individuality and marginalisation of emotion in organisations,¹⁶ and universities are organisations, so I don't know why I should have thought they would be different.'

'So, there's a limit to how individual you can be, even in this chapter.'

'Yes. I can safely reveal myself to be white, middle-class, English and female. But what does that really tell a reader, except that they can use their preconceived ideas about those categories to overlay the text?'¹⁷

'So say more,' Pohode suggested, looking mischievous.

¹³ Davidson 2000:124.

¹⁴ Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:7, Magrs 2001a:227.

¹⁵ Groom 2000:73.

¹⁶ E.g. Fineman 1993:1, Gabriel 2000:57.

¹⁷ Perriton 2001:41.

‘What, like telling people that I chose to study Sure Start managers partly for the reasons I gave in the methodology chapter about ease of access and ‘studying sideways’,¹⁸ but also because I felt sorry for them and sympathised with their difficulties? That I’m politically left-wing? That I fantasise about someone from the Government reading my thesis, using it as a basis for a decision to reduce the pressure on public sector workers, and thereby improving service delivery?’

Pohode was capering around on the desk doing a happy devil dance. ‘Yes, tell them those things! More like that! What about the relevance of your sexual orientation?’

‘Watch it,’ said Pohede. ‘That kind of personal disclosure can jeopardise the approval of your research.’¹⁹

‘But it shouldn’t, should it?’ Pohode became eerily solicitous. ‘You really want to say those things, don’t you, Polly?’

‘I do. Apart from the sexual orientation one. And I want them to be taken seriously.’

‘Oh, they will be, they definitely will,’ he assured her.

‘Pohode speaks with forked tongue,’ muttered Pohede.

He stuck his tongue out at her, which proved her right. ‘And why not sexual orientation too? Don’t you think that influences the way you see the world and the way the world sees you?’²⁰

‘It may well do, but it is nevertheless none of the world’s damn business,’²¹ said Polly firmly. ‘But maybe I should say something about my background. Like my

¹⁸ See chapter 4 of this thesis.

¹⁹ Warren 2000:190, Perriton 2001:44.

²⁰ Warren 2000:189.

²¹ Warren 2000:189–190.

BSc in social psychology and my MSc in social research methods. And my work experience in the private, statutory and voluntary sectors, including five years working with children and young people in residential care. And that I've been a manager myself, so I know all about the loneliness and the isolation. Although if I didn't know about it before, I sure as hell would know about it now from doing this bloody thesis. And that I'm now a professional researcher, consultant and writer, and I've been working with Sure Start managers in that capacity since 2000. That would all be relevant, wouldn't it?'

'Terribly tedious, though,' said Pohode.

'You're *such* a charmer,' snapped Polly. He made her a courtly bow. 'But I suppose it is a bit me, me, me.²² An autobiography won't help. I need to find a way to recreate some of the meanings that the research process had for me, and convey them to my readers.²³ I'd like to find a way to work more in partnership with those readers,²⁴ less as if they have to passively receive what I give them. Which they wouldn't do, anyway, as each reader will bring their own ideas to anything I write.²⁵ But the academic writing conventions conspire to pretend that's not the case, that the genre is neutral. Which it isn't.²⁶ Maybe if I can write this chapter differently, at least, it'll give my readers something new to get their teeth into.'

'So why don't you say something about what you know?' asked Pohode with a devilish expression.

'You know I'm not supposed to do that, you're just trying it on,' said Polly. 'I can say that I *argue* something, or that I *suggest* it, but not that I *know* it or *think* it.²⁷ It's one of those infuriating academic double binds.²⁸ I'm the expert on all this, but I mustn't claim to know anything.'

²² Eliasoph 2005:164.

²³ Taylor and White 2000:199–200.

²⁴ Clarke 2001:256.

²⁵ Gadamer 1975:356–7, Delafield 1999:60, Perriton 2001:43.

²⁶ Potter 1996:229, Davidson 2000:127.

²⁷ Groom 2000:67.

²⁸ Laing 1974:1.

‘But you can tell us what you think,’ he wheedled.

‘All right. I think that the emotional aspect of Sure Start managers’ work is marginalized, which does no favours to the managers themselves or to their service users or staff.²⁹ But I thought that when I started out, so have I learned anything or just superimposed my own preconceived ideas onto the research?’

‘Probably the latter.’ Pohode couldn’t hide his grin.

‘You’re just saying that to depress me, because you want me to quit.’

‘Argue with him, dear,’ suggested Pohede.

‘Okay. If I was going to argue with you, you horrible devil, I’d say that I may have learned something about using theory as a base for knowledge, as well as personal experience.’³⁰

Pohede clapped her tiny hands, delighted. ‘Good girl!’

‘And, of course, rigorous research. But personal experience counts too.’³¹ I refuse to eradicate it as part of my own knowledge base. Apart from anything else, it’s fundamental to working reflexively.’³²

‘All right, dear, you don’t have to.’

‘I know. As long as I make it clear that it’s what I’m drawing on. But even in the so-called reflexivity chapter, where my experience is supposed to be relevant, I can’t convey it. There’s too much, and language can’t do enough.’³³ What do I tell? I could write of my anxiety on the winter morning when I drove through the frosty countryside to my third data construction session, hoping the participants would turn up, hoping the venue I’d booked but never visited would be acceptable.

²⁹ See chapter 7 of this thesis.

³⁰ Perriton 2001:48.

³¹ Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:16, Perriton 2001:49.

³² Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:199.

³³ E.g. Parker 1999:28, Adams 2003:228, Eliasoph 2005:163.

I could try to describe the way it felt to be so immersed in data analysis that I didn't think about anything else for hours at a time. I could say something about the forbearance of my partner throughout the process, and the guilt and thankfulness that induced in me. I could go on and on thinking up examples of experience. But in the end we're just talking about different kinds of disclosure, even more artificially selected and presented, aren't we?

'Many different, but acceptable, styles of writing about reflexivity have been defined,'³⁴ said Pohede.

'I know. I could just pick one, make a case for using it and follow through. But that's too easy. I want to find a way to tell the story of my experience of this research, my place in it, in a way that's uniquely mine.'³⁵ And however I do that, it's going to be partial, contingent, context-driven.'³⁶ I'm not the 'me' that started this research and I'm not the 'me' that will undergo my viva. I'm somewhere in-between, and that's all I can tell about.'³⁷

'Wouldn't you like some absolute truth? Some real certainty?' asked Pohode.

'You know I would. But it's a fantasy.'³⁸ Like freedom from power. Pohode, you're going all blurry!

'I may have failed with you. But I'll be baaaaack...' His little figure spun backwards down a fleshy red tunnel that appeared in the air and disappeared again, leaving behind a smell of rotten eggs. Polly felt nauseous.

Pohede looked deeply satisfied. 'He may get more than me, but I get the best ones.'

'Look, you horrible little deity, whose agenda are we dealing with here anyway?'

³⁴ E.g. Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:192, Perriton 2001, Finlay 2002.

³⁵ Magrs 2001b:254.

³⁶ Finlay 2002:212.

³⁷ Doucet and Mauthner 2002:134.

³⁸ Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:vii.

'Aren't there always multiple agendas?'

'Yes, of course there are. And that's part of the problem. How can I ever convey that through the inadequate, ambiguous, unrepresentational medium of language?'³⁹

'It'll be tricky, dear, but I'm sure you'll find a way.'

'Maybe. After all, I have worked reflexively throughout, thinking as analytically as I could about all parts of the research and writing processes before, during and after them.⁴⁰ Which doesn't mean I've thought of everything. For example, take gender. I haven't used it as a main category anywhere in my thesis despite its importance.⁴¹ But from the start I was aware that the academy is not gender-neutral. Therefore, I specifically chose to have female supervisors. I kept a record of which books, chapters and articles I read had women as editors, writers or contributors; I tried to ensure that the work I cited included a similar proportion of women to the work I'd read in the first place.⁴² I wanted to make the MSM accessible to men and women, and was pleased to get a 50:50 gender split in my research participants – and in the small supernatural beings visiting me in the night, come to that. Of course none of those things neutralise the issues raised by gender, but they do go some way to demonstrate that I paid attention in a reflective way.'

Pohede nodded thoughtfully. 'Yes, you're right, they do.'

'So I'm fairly confident that I did my best. Although I can't completely prove I did, any more than I can completely prove the rigorousness of my data analytic technique.'

'Why's that?'

³⁹ Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:193, Rhodes and Brown 2005:469.

⁴⁰ Taylor and White 2000:198.

⁴¹ Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:219.

⁴² Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:222.

'Because it was just me, so people have to take my words for it. If I'd done the research in collaboration with someone else, its reflexiveness and rigour could have been more verifiable.'⁴³ But then I guess it would have been a very different PhD. Anyway, I think I've demonstrated enough aspects of my reflexive practice elsewhere in the thesis to show that I've had a good go.'⁴⁴

'So, then, dear, what is your thesis, as a whole?'

'It's a story. The story of my PhD. A story about stories, and that in itself is reflexive.'⁴⁵

'So the chapter you're worried about will be part of that story?'

'Yes. I guess. Maybe a kind of story within a story.'

'And how will you tell that story?'

'I don't know. I could tell about you and Pohode, but nobody would believe me.'

'Would that matter, dear?'

Polly considered it, her chin on her fists. 'Maybe not. If I wrote it well enough, Which wouldn't be easy, because reflexivity is a complex business.'⁴⁶ And power and language are as inextricably linked as power and knowledge.'⁴⁷ It seems to me that the authoritative language of the detached authorial voice carries more power, in academic circles, than the more messy, emotion-laden language of the fiction author.' She paused again for thought. 'But writing the chapter as fiction might serve to illustrate my claim that authenticity is more useful than 'truth', that we learn from fiction as well as so-called 'factual' writing.'⁴⁸ And maybe, by contrast, it could point up the fact that the whole of this thesis, like all research

⁴³ Finlay 2002:218.

⁴⁴ As shown in chapters 1 and 4.

⁴⁵ Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:22, Gabriel 2000:19.

⁴⁶ Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000:vii, Finlay 2002:222.

⁴⁷ Parkin 1993:169.

⁴⁸ Potter 1996:3.

writing, is in effect a fiction.⁴⁹ And we know that, paradoxically, one of the places where facts are constructed is fiction.⁵⁰ So perhaps an artistic approach could help to rebalance the reader's understanding by touching their emotions as well as their intellect.⁵¹ And, like the MSM stories, it could act as a springboard for discussion and further interpretation.⁵²

'So could you do that?' Pohede was fading.

'I think so. And thanks! Good luck with the league tables!'

'Good luck to you too, dear.' Her voice was faint, her outline an echo, until she disappeared from view, gently, dissolving into the background.

'I'll do it,' Polly said to the empty room. The dawn light was beginning to trickle around the edges of the blinds, but she didn't feel tired, she felt strangely invigorated. 'I'll start, right now.'

⁴⁹ Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000:169, Rhodes and Brown 2005:469.

⁵⁰ Potter 1996:94.

⁵¹ Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska 1999:203, Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000:84.

⁵² Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000:195, Finlay 2002:215.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to tell the reader about some of the ways in which I experienced the research process. I constructed the story of a night in the life of my alter ego Polly Semic. Two fictional deities were introduced, each with their own agenda – different from Polly's – to demonstrate some of the issues that arise in partnership working. Using a fictional style enabled me to make sense of 'Polly's' feelings and emotions about the process more easily than the conventional academic voice. Writing the chapter as a fictional story linked with academic references serves to demonstrate, within this thesis, that stories may be used to express and create emotion, to share and create meaning, to teach and to learn. The flexibility of creative writing permits fuller expression of emotion and experience than detached academic language.

These are some of the meanings that I have put in the reflexivity story. But, as we saw in the Introduction to this thesis, the author's intention cannot define the meaning of a text (Hekman 1986:193). The picture I am building as I write this thesis is now quite clearly visible to my mind's eye. The picture you are building as you read it will, I hope, be similarly visible to yours. But they are unlikely to be exactly the same picture: yours will be different from mine because it will be painted using your own preconceived ideas. The challenge for us both now, as we come towards a conclusion, is to remain open to all the possible meanings in the text, even though each of us can only do this in the context of 'the whole of our own meanings' (Gadamer 1975:238).

Writing the chapter in this way involves taking a risk because including my own story in my thesis, written in a fictional style, transgresses an academic taboo (Vickers 2002:611). For Vickers, 'the work of researchers as storytellers remains underrated, dismissed, and trivialized, especially as a useful, deliberate, and provocative approach to organizational research' (ibid) and 'telling it like it was (or is) can threaten the status quo' (ibid:614). Taking this risk, with its potential for threatening the academic status quo, feels both exciting and scary. What if it damages my chances of passing my viva? What if I affect an academic's opinion

of story in such a way that they take it more seriously in future? Are the possibilities for positive change worth the risk to my self-esteem and career?

Chapter Nine – Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter aims to complete the picture of this thesis. It will offer another reflexive view of the context for the work, a personal story linked with partnership, emotion and language, as well as the other central themes emerging from the data: power and meaning. It will discuss the impact of time limits on the practice of emotion management, and suggest some implications for policy. It will consider the extent to which the research questions have been answered, and suggest potentially fruitful areas for further investigation.

However, it is important to acknowledge that although this thesis appears complete, its pages bound, its contents defined, it is as context-driven, partial and contingent as any other story. There is always more that can be said, new contexts from which to view issues, other conclusions to draw. This conclusion is drawn like a picture to be viewed from different angles at different times by different people. It is not drawn, like curtains, to shut out the light.

Emotion and Power in the Workplace

My interest in the relationship between work and emotion began to develop in my very first job, an office-based position in a City of London merchant bank. I was shocked by the marginalisation of emotion in the workplace. When a colleague's sister died suddenly, she took a week off and then returned as emotionless as if she had spent the week redecorating; office whispers asserted that she did not want to talk about it. Another colleague's husband was terminally ill in a local hospital; she visited him there during her lunch break and in the evenings, but took no time off to care for him and carried on at work as if her personal life was irrelevant. A colleague who I knew to be gay remained impassive in the face of homophobic office banter. Suppressing one's emotions in the work environment was expected, admired and rewarded. I thought it was inhuman.

On Friday nights I worked as a volunteer in a Soho night shelter for homeless teenagers, swapping my suit and shoulder pads for jeans and a T-shirt, and the palatial office environment for a dingy cockroach-ridden church hall next to a plague pit. Here emotions were highly valued as sources of information. In the first hour the volunteer team, led by a paid worker, focused on planning and preparation. Part of this preparation involved the paid worker checking on the emotional state of each volunteer, to facilitate the management of the shift. It was made clear to all volunteers that the paid worker and the volunteer team leader would make time on request at any point during the shift to discuss volunteers' feelings or concerns. Later, at the end of the active part of the night, a debriefing session involved discussions of the young people. Volunteers' emotional responses were given as much credence as the factual information they had gathered in building a picture of each young person's situation and likely needs. This approach made much more sense to me.

Looking back at these early experiences in the light of the themes from this thesis, they make a different kind of sense. Power, trust, complexity, communication, identity, performance, tension, conflicting agendas, emotional labour and emotion management – they were all there in both environments, although the two were so different. And in both environments it is likely that people used their discretion and judgement to decide how to manage their emotions within the prevailing power structure. In the City, emotions were spoken of in 'unmanageable spaces' (Gabriel 2003:176), chiefly over lunch in bars and cafes: one colleague was close to tears as she told me of a recent pregnancy termination, another raged about his errant boyfriend, a third spoke eloquently of her reaction to her mother's death from cancer. These stories gave a different meaning to emotion than that ascribed within the professional culture. In Soho, as emotion was welcomed, the use of judgement may have been more about what to keep private than about what and how to disclose.

Those environments were very different from today's public sector partnerships, and my roles within them were very different from the role of a Sure Start manager. Yet the thematic similarities I perceive suggest to me that there may be equivalent similarities with other jobs and workplaces. A full assessment of the

generalisability of this research will depend on future research along comparable lines. But although I would suggest that there may be similarities in the themes related to emotional labour between different jobs and workplaces, I do not propose that all jobs and workplaces should be regarded as having the same relationship to emotional labour. Indeed it is evident from the two examples given above that they do not. In the City, the prevailing power structure marginalised emotion; in Soho, the prevailing power structure made emotion central. But in each environment the prevailing power structure was intimately linked to emotion management.

The prevailing power structure of Sure Start, as demonstrated by the analysis of data collected using traditional methods and by the interpretation of data from the MSM, marginalises emotion. However, the interpretation of data from the MSM also shows that the nature of the Sure Start manager's work requires emotion management to play a central part. This creates tensions for Sure Start managers between prescriptive and presentational/philanthropic emotion management, as shown in chapter 7.

Despite the difficulties that Sure Start managers encounter in managing their own feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of others, including community members and other professionals as well as Sure Start staff, the interpretation of data from the MSM demonstrates that they manage to do this effectively and skilfully. Melucci speaks of 'identity entrepreneurs', people who are 'creating and selling the capacity for manoeuvring with identities; producing new opportunities for recognition, importing languages and codes from one field to another' (ibid:53). I would argue that Sure Start managers could be described as 'emotion entrepreneurs'. This research suggests that they contrive ways of managing their own feelings and emotions, and the feelings and emotions of others, which include the creation of opportunities for emotional communication, and for making and sharing meanings, through storytelling. And, as shown in chapter 7, this involves both internal and external translation.

The research demonstrated that translation and interpretation permeate the topic of emotion. If I feel an emotion, I must identify and name or describe it, to give it a

meaning for myself, before I can communicate it to someone else. This is the process of internal translation from a physical and/or mental sensation into language. Then the person I speak to has to interpret my linguistic communication, giving it a meaning of their own, to achieve understanding of what I have said. This is the external translation – external to me, that is – of my language into their understanding. This process can create a kind of 'Chinese whispers' effect. For example, a young woman may feel abdominal unease, on the verge of nausea, with a slightly increased heart rate. She identifies this as nervousness, and confides to a friend that she is nervous. As they are standing in the queue for a theme park ride at the time, this seems reasonable. However, her emotionally literate friend reminds her of the theme park's impeccable safety record and her love of scary rides, and suggests that perhaps she is excited rather than nervous. She internally reassesses her physical symptoms and announces that her friend is right and she is excited. Does she feel any different? Physically, no – but she does feel emotionally happier and more at ease, because excitement has more pleasurable connotations than nervousness. Did she make an incorrect initial identification of her physical sensations as nervousness when 'excitement' would have been more accurate? Possibly – not that it matters. The point is that she identified and named an emotion, giving it a meaning that enabled an understanding in her friend, who then gave it a further meaning that led to an intervention that caused a change in her feelings. This is an illustration of the cyclical relationship between emotion and language described by Reddy (2001:87), with the role of meaning offering an additional dimension to that relationship.

To begin with, as shown in the Introduction, I thought the tensions experienced by Sure Start managers around work-related emotion was an issue of language: that they did not speak about the emotional aspects of their work because there was no professional vocabulary for them to use. Through the research I have learned that language and vocabulary are indeed relevant to the issue of emotion in the workplace, but as part of the wider issue of power. The language available to people at work is dictated by the prevailing power structure, which silences discussion that does not help to meet or further the aims of the organisation or partnership. In the City, emotion was irrelevant to the bottom line. In Soho there

was no bottom line and emotion was relevant to the interpersonal nature of the work. In Sure Start, while there is no overt need to make profit, financial management is a central part of a manager's responsibility; there is a need to maximise available resources and ideally draw in new ones as well. Emotion is relevant to the interpersonal nature of the partnership's work with service users, but much of this work is delegated to front-line staff who encounter those service users more frequently. It is perhaps no coincidence that Hochschild began her pioneering work on emotional labour with a study of front-line staff, and looked at managers 10 years later; or that much of the work on emotion in organisations also focuses on front-line staff (e.g. Pithouse 1996, Meerabeau and Page 1999, Olesen and Bone 1999). Yet I would argue, on the basis of this research, that emotion management is involved in most if not all of a Sure Start manager's work, whether with their own managers, staff, representatives of partner agencies, government officials, contractors, or members of the local community.

Time

But the trouble with emotion management is that it is time-consuming. Time is a scarce commodity for Sure Start managers, as Simon made clear through the circus metaphor in his story, which for him is *'about at times having to spin so many plates as a programme manager, competing priorities, all the timescales that we have to work towards, the deadlines'*¹. In the Sure Start culture 'quick wins' (DfES 2002:13) are prized, and this can compromise quality as this excerpt from the discussion of Joe's story indicates:

Sadie: Takes eighty to a hundred years to build a cathedral.

Joe: Really? I guess Jocasta won't be very happy.

Sadie: Wetherspoons can be up in a jiffy.

*Joe: (laughter)*²

Joe's story compared a cathedral to Sure Start as it was originally conceived, and suggested that the government's move from Sure Start to children's centres was

¹ Simon's story, lines 19–21; see also appendix 4.

² Discussion of Joe's story, lines 364–370.

akin to turning a cathedral into a Wetherspoons chain pub. For the City group, Wetherspoons did not represent good quality, although they recognised that people from their local communities might have a different view. Joe suggests that Jocasta, a senior manager responsible for implementing Government requirements, will not be happy if the work takes too much time.

Simon's story also went on to tell of the potential conflict between vision and reality due to time pressure:

At some stage you have all the plates spinning, and I can picture the plates as being red, and blue, and yellow, and green, and plastic, and china, and a whole range of different materials, and they're all really going well, and the plates are spinning at such a pace, it's at that time that you think 'I know we're doing a really good job', because there's no wobbles among the plates, even though the china ones are looking a little cracked and a little fragile around the edges, we still have them spinning, and it's at that point that you know you're doing really well. Until somebody steps in with a new directive, a new initiative, a new piece of work to be involved with the work that we're doing in the programme, and it's at that point that those edges on those plates get sharper and sharper, and the cracks get deeper and deeper, and the plates eventually do drop. And when they drop, do they drop onto a rubber mat, in so much as the fact that they're not going to shatter, or do they drop onto a concrete surface? And if they drop onto a concrete surface, then it's at that point that you know that everything you stood for, all the work that you did, all the visionary stuff, all the negotiation, all those things, is going to come crashing down, with the vision that you set out linked back to the vision that we had for our partnership working.³

As shown in the Introduction to this thesis, new directives and initiatives are frequent, and Simon makes a clear link between the extra work they cause and the likelihood of the original vision being compromised. Elaine is explicit about the impact of this continual time pressure on the quality of managing others' emotions when she speaks of being '*at a meeting where you feel you need to be, have a slower pace and be nurturing and caring, but you're going 'oh no' and looking at*

³ Simon's story, lines 21–39.

*your watch because you know what you've got to do next or what's happened that morning when you got a phone call*⁴. Conversely, no participant speaks of the impact of time pressure on the management of their own emotions. However, participants from all three groups described the MSM as unusual in giving them time during the working day to think and reflect. As emotion management takes time, this suggests that the time pressure they are under is also detrimental to the management of their own emotions.

Melucci draws a useful distinction between 'social time', which is linear, measurable and predictable, and 'inner time', associated with emotions, which is multiple, discontinuous and cyclical (1996:18). Sure Start managers are required to operate in 'social time', with their diaries full of appointments, few of which are explicitly for emotion management. The exception is supervision, which in social care refers to a one-to-one meeting with a designated 'supervisor' – perhaps one's line manager or board chairperson – to discuss issues arising from one's work that may include emotional issues. Elaine describes a difference between the supervision she offers to her staff and the supervision offered to her:

*Do you think that we create nurturing environments for our own staff, and follow best practice in terms of Investors In People, and support and supervision, you know, the whole range of issues? I feel I do, so my sense of team-building and care for my team is very very high, and then that somehow makes that drop even more painful, because I've set up the system where I've got all my managers and they've got all their people, and the induction process is better than it's ever been anywhere else anyone's worked, and the supervision is better, and the team-building, the awaydays, the meetings, buh buh buh buh buh, and then we go up to this level and think 'cor, wouldn't it be lovely if somebody up there was doing the same thing that I'm doing for my however many people it is that I've got, and bringing me along that level, and saying "how are you doing with X X X", and having that detailed knowledge of your work programme and your progression and your issues', and you're kind of going 'ah, here I am.*⁵

⁴ Discussion of Fred's story, lines 375–378.

⁵ Discussion of Simon's story, lines 455–468.

Elaine works hard on the emotion management of her staff, and they recognise and value this. But Elaine feels that nobody works on her emotion management. For her the difference is '*painful*'. This again suggests that Sure Start managers' own emotion management is largely disregarded in their workplaces and that this is detrimental to their well-being.

Policy Implications

Some Sure Start managers may receive competent, caring supervision. However, none of the research participants spoke in these terms. Miller, Hoggett and Mayo, in their recent study of front-line professionals and their managers working in regeneration partnerships, found that supervision and other support structures were 'largely unrecognised and absent' (2006:14). The discovery of the breadth of the emotional resource that Sure Start managers need to do their jobs came as a surprise. It would seem sensible to support and develop this through good quality supervision. So one policy implication of this research could be for managers of children's services managers to put more emphasis on taking the time necessary to provide good quality supervision for the managers they manage.

But the managers of Sure Start managers may not themselves have the skills and knowledge to provide good quality supervision, because of the marginalisation of emotion in professional life. So another policy implication could be to assess and meet the need for training in emotional intelligence for managers at all levels. Many training providers are now offering courses in emotional intelligence, and recent anecdotal evidence suggests that this is beginning to be taken up by local authorities and public sector partnerships.

A third issue is that of risk assessment. Amy's initial story refers to this obliquely, when the people on the bridge have the idea to go to London and contribute to the decision-making about '*sproglets*':

'Let's build a car and go there ourselves, to tell them what we really want. Let's pile in all the sproglets and take them too.'

'Car seats,' said Mrs Grobbet.

(laughter)⁶

Listening to the recording, Amy speaks fast and excitedly as she uses the community voice (chapter 6) to perform the role of the local people generating ideas about building a car and taking the sproglets. Then her voice drops by several tones as she shifts into a Sure Start manager's voice and says 'Car seats', which is a shorthand reference to the legal health and safety requirements every manager must remember and act upon. The laughter of the others is a recognition of this.

Later, in discussion of Amy's story, risk assessment is overtly referred to:

Jane: You didn't do a risk assessment on this before you set off to London, did you?

Amy: Should have, you really should have.

Jane: Processes, those sorts of things that

Amy: Should have written a risk assessment, yes⁷

But risk assessments, also mentioned by the Borders group, focus on physical safety. For example, Government guidance suggests that 'the important things you need to decide are whether a hazard is significant, and whether you have it covered by satisfactory precautions so that the risk is small' (HSE 2003:2) 'Hazard' is defined as 'anything that can cause harm (e.g. chemicals, electricity, working from ladders etc)' (ibid:3). These are all physical hazards; there is no reference to possible causes of emotional harm such as overwork, conflict or multiple emotional demands. So another policy implication of this research could be to widen risk assessment to include the emotional dimension.

⁶ Amy's story, lines 57–61.

⁷ Discussion of Amy's story, lines 469–476.

Research Implications

The research has produced preliminary answers to the four research questions posed in the Introduction to this thesis. However, these answers raise new questions in their turn.

The first question was 'How do Sure Start managers manage their own feelings and emotions?' They seem to do this by using their discretion to make judgements about whether or not to obey implicit feeling rules and about what type of emotion management to use in a given situation. However, the data interpretation suggests that their agency may be limited by a sense that some implicit feeling rules are absolute, and by the prevailing power structures. This raises further questions such as 'Are there other ways in which Sure Start managers manage their own emotions and feelings, and, if so, what are they?' and 'How do prevailing power structures affect emotion management in different contexts?'.

The second question was 'How do Sure Start managers manage the feelings and emotions of others?' The data interpretation suggests that they do this by listening to people, motivating people and mediating between people. This raises further questions such as 'Are there other ways in which Sure Start managers manage the feelings and emotions of others, and, if so, what are they?'

Sure Start managers evidently use their judgement to help them decide which emotional management strategy to call on in a given situation. It might be interesting to turn this around and investigate the extent to which feelings and emotions are drawn upon in managers' judgements about other aspects of management. It might also be interesting to investigate other factors that influence managers' choices about which emotional management strategy to use in particular situations.

The third question was 'How do Sure Start managers navigate through the complex, ambiguous and uncertain emotional experiences of partnership working?' The data shows that part of the answer is 'By drawing on a great range

of emotional responses.' This is interesting because it confirms that the work of Sure Start managers has a significant emotional component. But it is not a complete answer, and raises further questions such as 'Does the emotional life of Sure Start managers at work differ from their emotional life elsewhere, and, if so, how?'

The fourth question was 'How do Sure Start managers make sense of their emotional experiences?' It was surprising to discover that, in the discussions of the twelve initial stories, there were a further 108 identifiable stories. Interpretation of these suggests that Sure Start managers share stories as a way of making sense of their work-related emotional experiences. This raises further questions such as 'Under what circumstances is it safe to tell and listen to stories about work-related emotional experience?' and 'What role does gender play in telling and hearing stories about work-related emotional experience?'

These questions, answers, and further questions continue to demonstrate the triad of three-way links between partnership, language, emotion, story, power, and meaning shown in figure 1 (Introduction). Looked at all together, the questions and answers show some aspects of the relationships between these elements, which then suggest more questions for consideration.

Working in partnership creates, for Sure Start managers, the need to develop and draw on a very wide range of emotional resources. Is this also the case for other workers in public sector partnerships, or for managers in other kinds of partnership? The research suggests that working in partnership may have a different emotional impact on managers from working in organisations. As management in organisations now usually involves some partnership working (Huxham and Vangen 2005:8), the boundaries between the working styles are beginning to blur. But it may still be interesting to investigate whether there is truly a difference in emotional impact between working in a single organisation and doing similar work in a multi-agency partnership.

As stated in the Introduction to this thesis, I originally thought that there was a single public sector professional language. However, the research shows that

working in a Sure Start partnership creates a need to speak several different professional languages. For Sure Start managers, as Luke said, this includes the languages of the voluntary sector, local authority, primary care trust and social services, among others. This research indicates that a new partnership such as Sure Start also creates its own language. And of course everyone working in any partnership also has access to everyday social language. It could be interesting to conduct further investigation of the links between language, emotion and meaning in the context of different professional languages, to differentiate beyond the conception of a single public sector professional language that was the starting point for this research.

This research has demonstrated potential links between prevailing power structures and choices about emotional management styles. The links between language and power are well documented (e.g. Fairclough 1989, Kohn 2000). This research has demonstrated that professional languages exclude some topics, such as emotional matters, by leaving out the necessary vocabulary for their discussion. Therefore it may be that there are similar links within public sector partnerships between power structures and choices about language spoken, and this is another area that might merit further investigation.

The research has also demonstrated that Sure Start managers circumvent the limitations of professional language vocabularies by telling stories, using social language, in informal settings and other 'unmanageable spaces'. The organisation studies literature shows that stories are an integral part of human sense-making, are intrinsically subversive, and can be used as vehicles for change (Greenhalgh, Russell and Swinglehurst 2005:447–8). This research has shown that Sure Start managers use stories for sense-making, subversively and as vehicles for change. It may be interesting to investigate how stories are used for sense-making beyond the group creation of meaning demonstrated in the data, and to conduct further investigation of the links established in this research between story, meaning and emotion. It may also be interesting to consider how stories relate to power structures and how they are used to resist such structures, perhaps through further investigation of the links established in this research between power, emotion and language.

The literature suggests that stories play a variety of roles in organisations, e.g. in the transfer of tacit knowledge (Haghirian and Chini 2002), as a spur to imagination and creativity (Koch 2003:1183), and as an essential ingredient in leadership and change management (Denning 2004:xiii). It is likely, therefore, that stories play other roles in partnerships than those identified through this research, so it would be interesting to find out whether stories also have other roles for the managers of public sector partnerships.

Some findings may be specific to public sector partnerships in general or ABIs in particular. These include the tension between prescriptive and presentational/philanthropic emotion management, the boundary-spanning nature of the manager who can be viewed as strategic or operational depending on the position of the viewer in the power structure, and the apparent relationship between prescriptive emotion management and the operational role, and presentational/philanthropic emotion management and the strategic role. It would be useful to research these relationships more fully, with the aim of exploring the links between emotion management techniques and the prevailing power structure.

Power and trust are two themes that recur frequently in the partnership literature. The data constructed by the MSM outlined several interesting aspects of power as it affects the experience of Sure Start managers. The thematic interpretation in chapter 5 helped to identify a requirement to exercise power-over at times, and a pervasive feeling of powerlessness. The story interpretation in chapter 6 identified different types of power, including the power of spoken and written words, the power of the community, power to affect people emotionally and subversive power. Some effects of the prevailing power structure were identified, including the range of controls that have an impact on the work of Sure Start managers, such as cultural, technological, spatial, structural and emotional controls. Sure Start managers are to some extent – albeit reluctantly – agents of this power structure. The focus on the emotional dimension of partnership working enabled me to conceptualise a triad of three-way links between power, emotion and language; language, emotion, and meaning; and story, emotion and meaning, as

shown in Figure 1 (Introduction). The research also suggests two-way links between emotion and power, between language and power, and between storytelling and power. The nature and extent of all these links, both in public sector partnerships and in other settings, might usefully be explored through further research.

Conversely, the infrequency of mentions of trust and identity came as a surprise, particularly given the emphasis placed on these in the partnership literature. Investigating the reasons for this may also be a fruitful area for further research.

One particularly interesting aspect of the MSM was the opportunity it provided for me to witness the apparent creation of meaning, particularly within group stories. The Shire group spoke of the power of stories, as discussed in chapter 6. There may be implications for further research into ways that fictional or fictionalised stories could be used with groups in partnerships and organisations, e.g. for project development or team-building as well as data construction.

Reflections on the MSM

The MSM seems to work well with peer groups but is untried with groups of varied status. Participants thought it would be more difficult to manage with power inequalities in the group. I am not convinced, because I think if presented sensitively and fully, and facilitated skilfully, it could promote greater understanding across a status divide, and therefore improve working practices. However, this would depend on the skills of the facilitator as well as the willingness of the participants to take some risks. I hope to test this in the future.

It could be argued that the MSM's emphasis on authenticity rather than objective truth renders it highly valid for investigating slippery subjects like emotion and partnership. It could equally be argued that its use of fiction renders it artificial and therefore invalid. A story has been described as a 'legitimate research product' (Koch 1998:1182) but storytelling has also been called unscientific and biased (ibid:1187, Vickers 2002:619). The position taken will depend on the epistemological and ontological position of the arguer.

I think that on the whole the method of data construction and interpretation used was fit for purpose. If I could do it again, I might not bother collecting data using traditional methods, because there is considerable evidence in the methodology and emotion literatures that traditional methods of data collection do not elicit useful data about emotion (e.g. Oppenheim 1966:49; Mishler 1986:ix; Gillham 2000:1,10–12; Hollway and Jefferson 2000:2). It was notable that, although much more time was spent in collecting data through the participant observation and the telephone interviews than in constructing data using the MSM, the traditional methods of data collection only enabled the identification of 25 emotions (appendix 2) – none of which were discussed in any detail – as opposed to the 107 emotions identified through the MSM (appendix 8), many of which were discussed in detail. However, I would consider using non-traditional but established methods that I learned about while doing this research, such as photo-elicitation or action research, both of which have been found to elicit useful data about emotion (e.g. Schratz and Steiner-Löffler 1998:245–250, Vince 2002:76). I would have liked to test the MSM with non-peer groups, but this would have broadened the research too far. I would have been interested to collaborate on the data interpretation, ideally with a Sure Start manager, but that would not have been possible in the context of this research. It may be that I will find an opportunity to do so in future.

As stated in chapter 4, Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited by Robson 1993:403) put forward three assessment criteria for qualitative research: credibility, which requires the researcher to ‘demonstrate that the enquiry was carried out in a way which ensures that the subject of the enquiry was accurately identified and described’ (ibid); transferability, which means that the research could ‘be used in the development of further studies in a variety of settings’ (ibid:405); and confirmability, which means that there is enough information for readers of the research to ‘judge the adequacy of the process’ and ‘assess whether the findings flow from the data’ (ibid:406). The aim was for this research to be credible, transferable and confirmable, as well as rigorous and relevant (chapter 4).

The extent of transferability of the MSM, e.g. to non-peer groups or with a different starting question, is yet to be proved. This thesis is partly designed to

demonstrate the credibility and confirmability of the research. For example, the description of the history and context of Sure Start in the Introduction is intended to contribute to the demonstration of credibility. Also, the inclusion of some of the MSM transcripts in appendix 4, and of many excerpts from the transcripts in the text, is intended to contribute to the demonstration of confirmability (all transcribed text would have been included in this thesis if the word count permitted).

However, it is for its readers to make the final assessments of the extent of the credibility and confirmability of this research. If it is deemed to be credible and confirmable, it may then be worth testing its transferability by using different discussion topics with different types of groups in different settings.

I believe, therefore, that this thesis demonstrates the level of rigour of my research. I also believe that the research is relevant, as shown by its implications for policy (above).

Conclusion

The research has used innovative methods to construct and interpret data, and has taken an interpretative approach, focusing on the importance of language. It has opened up several agendas that could be pursued in future research. As there are now no Sure Start managers since April 2006, any future research would have to be carried out with Children's Centre managers or other similar professionals. However, although this research has been distinctive in taking Sure Start managers as its focus of study, what has been learned is likely to apply in many partnership contexts. I am reasonably confident about this because many of my findings are in alignment with the partnership literature.

Where my findings are not in alignment with the partnership literature, most are in alignment with the emotion literature. The few remaining findings offer potential contributions to the partnership or emotion literatures. For example, I have identified the theme of performance, as an individual method of managing choices about showing and hiding emotions in the workplace, as absent from the partnership literature. Also, my initial suggestions for links between the themes in the partnership literature and specific emotional responses offer a new area for

exploration within the partnership literature. The finding that people working as Sure Start managers need a wide emotional range to draw on to create convincing emotional performances enriches the conceptualisation of emotional labour found in the emotion literature. Also, the relationship between emotion, professional language and personal language highlighted in chapter 5 adds another dimension to the account of the relationship between language and emotion found in the emotion literature. As shown in chapter 6, the focus on the emotional dimension of partnership working has revealed a triad of three-way links between power, emotion and language; language, emotion, and meaning; and story, emotion and meaning. These relationships were discussed in more detail in chapter 7, and the current chapter has suggested ways in which these relationships could be explored further. Furthermore, the use of stories has proved to be fruitful in researching emotions in partnership settings, as it has been for many years in researching emotions in organisational settings, and this offers another potential contribution to the partnership literature.

My learning has been practical as well as theoretical. In the course of doing this research, I have learned the potential value of non-traditional methods of data construction for helping to answer research questions that traditional methods find it hard or impossible to answer. I have also learned the value of coding frames, and of using more than one, for data interpretation. And I have learned the usefulness of theory and previous research in promoting thought and in helping to create a map for current research.

My personal engagement in the issues was primarily a strength. It motivated me throughout, and enabled me to gain access to research participants. However, I do recognise that someone else might have addressed the research questions in a very different way. I suspect that my long-term engagement with the issues has caused blind spots. Perhaps I could describe these as parts of my personality that are unclear or invisible to me, or that I find it impossible to change. If I knew what they were – or how to change them – they would not be blind spots. I have employed various devices in the hope of revealing these to the reader: the design of the first coding frame; the iterative approach to the data interpretation; the reflexive approach to the research and to its writing up.

Language has played a crucial central role in this research beyond its role as one of the framing aspects. Every single bit of the research has been thought about, talked about, corresponded about, conducted and written up in language. Language, especially written academic language, has a way of sounding authoritative, however many hedging techniques may be used. Yet the subjects under study – partnership, emotion, story, human beings – are complex, ambiguous, and uncertain, as is language itself. Chapter 8, in moving beyond the conventional boundaries of academic thesis writing, aimed to illustrate this.

Taking a Gadamerian approach to interpretation enables the use of meaning to bridge the perceived gap between fact and fiction. Language is the vehicle that can carry ideas and emotions over that bridge. It is also the primary vehicle that carries the meanings of ideas and emotions from one individual to another, engendering the feeling of ‘consensus’ or recognition and mutual understanding. The language of fictional stories can create genuine learning for people by evoking real feelings and emotions as well as by communicating ideas.

This research has shown quite clearly that Sure Start managers are, and need to be, skilled emotion managers. Yet it appears that they become ‘emotion entrepreneurs’ despite a working environment in which emotion is marginalized while implicit feeling rules abound. There is no mention of emotion in their job descriptions or in the official policy guidance documents they are expected to work from. Their supervision arrangements often seem to be unsatisfactory. As emotion plays a key role in such managerial necessities as reasoning (McLaughlin 2003:68) and decision-making (Bechara 2004:30), it seems short-sighted at best to continue to marginalise it. It is hoped that the findings of this research will contribute to the professional acknowledgment of emotion’s central role in the management of children’s services and public sector partnerships.

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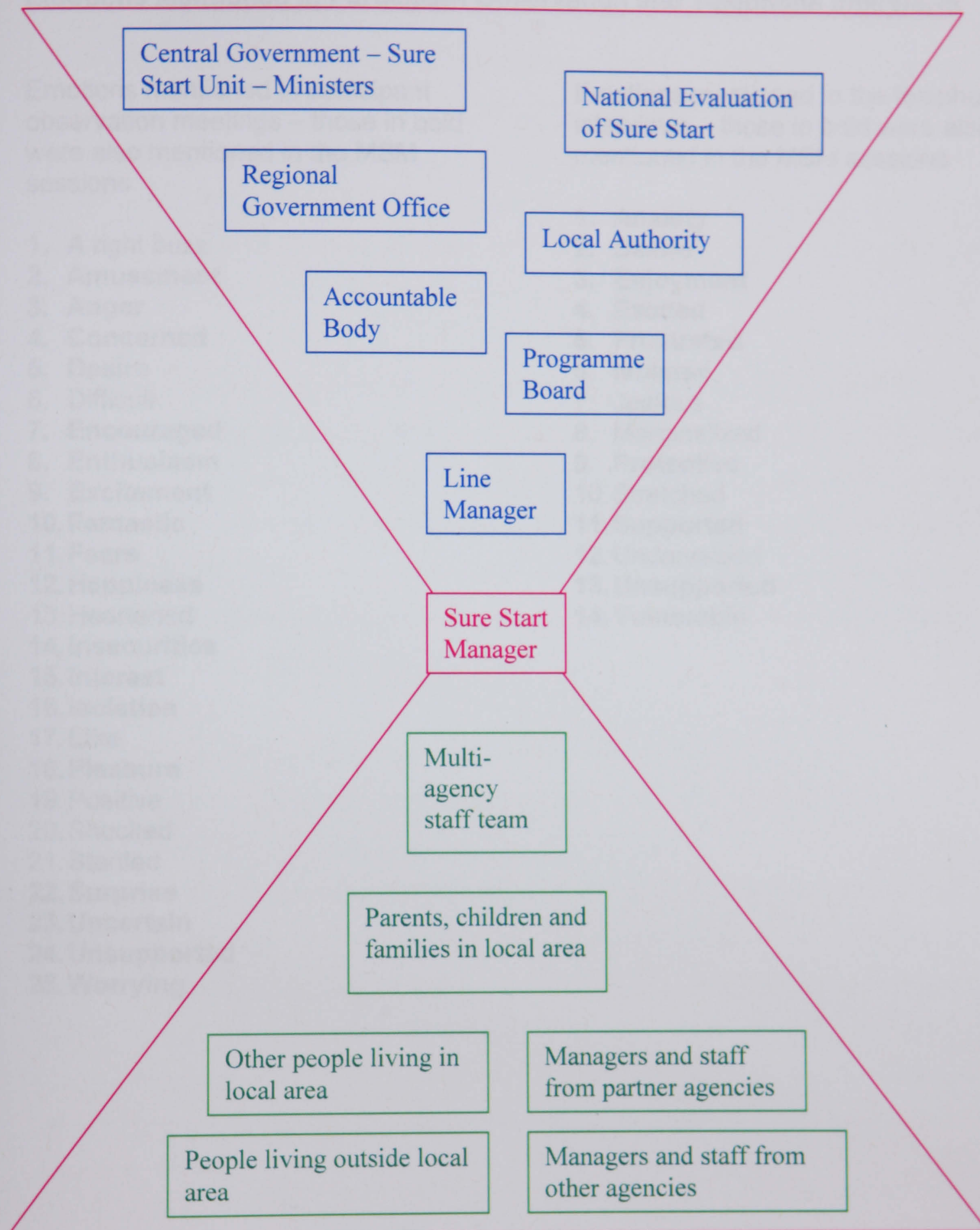
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Appendix 1 – Sure Start Manager's Position: The Hourglass View



Appendix 2

Emotions Mentioned in Participant Observation and Telephone Interviews

Emotions mentioned in participant observation meetings – those in bold were also mentioned in the MSM sessions

1. A right buzz
2. **Amusement**
3. **Anger**
4. **Concerned**
5. **Desire**
6. Difficult
7. **Encouraged**
8. **Enthusiasm**
9. **Excitement**
10. **Fantastic**
11. **Fears**
12. **Happiness**
13. Heartened
14. **Insecurities**
15. **Interest**
16. **Isolation**
17. **Like**
18. **Pleasure**
19. Positive
20. Shocked
21. Startled
22. **Surprise**
23. **Uncertain**
24. **Unsupported**
25. **Worrying**

Emotions mentioned in the telephone interviews – those in bold were also mentioned in the MSM sessions

1. **Anxiety**
2. **Desire**
3. **Enjoyment**
4. **Excited**
5. **Frustrated**
6. **Isolated**
7. Jealous
8. Marginalized
9. **Protective**
10. Stretched
11. **Supported**
12. Undervalued
13. **Unsupported**
14. **Vulnerable**

Appendix 3 – Information and Consent Sheet

I am working towards a PhD about the emotional labour of Sure Start managers. I believe that the emotional impact of managing partnership working in children's services is rarely addressed, and that this is detrimental to the managers, the services and ultimately to the children and families we aim to support. I have come to this belief through my own experience, both as a children's services manager myself, and as a researcher and consultant working with other children's services managers.

I'm sure you're all aware of traditional methods of collecting data for research: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups. Researchers work very hard to elicit the 'right' or 'true' data, but mostly we can't really tell whether we achieve this or not. In my research, I'm changing the focus away from the supposed accuracy of the data towards a reflective approach, focusing on making it possible for everyone involved in the data collection process to learn things along the way. The method I'm planning to use for this is storytelling.

I've chosen storytelling because we all tell and hear stories, all the time, and we all learn from stories. Everyone knows how stories work.

So, we are going to spend some time together between [time] and [time] on [date] at [venue]. On this day, I will ask each of you to tell a very short story – just two to three minutes in length – about some aspect of how it feels to work in partnership as a Sure Start manager. I'm completely uninterested in whether it is a true story. And there are no limits beyond the limits of your own imagination: the story may mention parents, statistical returns or Government initiatives; equally, it may mention ghosts, queens or weasels.

You are being given this information sheet in advance so that you have some time to prepare. But I am not looking for a polished performance of a story written down and learned by heart. However, it didn't seem fair to spring this on you on the day. So I'd suggest that you think about it a bit and play with it in your mind (there is no need to

write anything, but if you want an aide-memoire, jot down at the very most a few brief notes) so that on the day, you'll have some idea of what you want to say.

After you have told your story, each listener will say what the story means to them; what issues it raises; how they might change it if they were to tell it themselves. Be aware that people may find meanings in your story that you didn't intend to put there! Make a note of anything that surprises you, and be prepared to learn from it.

Then there will be a general discussion of the story and the responses. There are some ground rules for these discussions, as follows:

- Whether or not the story is 'good' is not an issue.
- What the storyteller really feels or thinks is not an issue either; discussion should focus on what the story expresses.
- Any disagreement with feelings or opinions expressed in the story should be presented positively.
- Discussion should be guided by a principle of mutual support.
- The telling of each story, and subsequent discussion, will be allocated an equal period of time, and everyone shares responsibility for timekeeping.
- Periods of silence are OK; this time is useful for thinking and feeling.

When all the stories are told, and all the discussions completed, there will be a final period of discussion and reflection on the morning as a whole.

The entire morning's work will be recorded on minidisc. Transcripts of the recordings will be made available to you on request, once the transcription process is complete.

Any part of this data may be used towards my PhD thesis and other publications. Any data that is used will be rendered completely anonymous: your name will not be used, any details in the data that could identify you will be changed, and the name of your local authority will be omitted or fictionalised.

If you have any queries about anything relating to the day or my research, please do give me a call on 01889 564739 or email me on helen@weresearchit.co.uk.

If you are happy to take part on this basis, please sign below and bring this document with you on the day.

Thank you for your help. I look forward to seeing you on [date].

I agree to take part in Helen Kara's research, and consent to her use of any data I may provide on [date], on the basis set out above.

Signed

Name (please print)

Date

Appendix 4 – Initial Stories told by Sure Start Managers

Pam's Story

Once upon a time, in a kingdom not so very far away, there was a small part of this kingdom that was very boring. The king was very concerned about this, because the subjects were becoming more and more boring with every year that went past. So he got together with his various ministers: chap that dealt with the arts, somebody else who dealt with welfare, someone else who dealt with the treasury, and they decided that they would put this scheme together. And it had to be fun, and people had to engage with it, so, they decided the best way to do this was to invite a travelling show to come to the town: a circus, funfair, sideshows, but someone needed to be in charge of co-ordinating this, so he asked his eldest daughter, Princess Susan, to co-ordinate and look after this. So she organised the travelling show to come, having spoken to the local people about what they would like, what they wouldn't like, and so the show came to town, so she organised trips for people to come and be part of this, and the first group arrived, and they had a good look round, and they went on a few of the sideshows, the traditional thing, you know, win a goldfish, throw ping pong balls in a bowl, whatever. And everything seemed to be going OK. And then she noticed little groups of them sitting round whingeing. So she said 'what's the matter?' and they said 'well this isn't what we expected, we didn't say we wanted this, this doesn't suit my kids, oh no, I don't think that's – that's not safe! Oh no we're not doing this any more.' Whereupon Susan said 'Well what do you think would be better, then?' And they went 'Well we don't know, you're the co-ordinator, tell us!' 'Well if I decide and you don't like it we'll be in the same boat again, won't we, so I think you need to think about what you would like.' Hmmm. There was a deafening silence. So Susan said 'Well, how about we actually go into the circus, we'll go into the Big Top, and see whether you, something occurs to you and whether you actually like that.'

So they sat down, they were all bought candy floss. they all sat there, their children appeared to be enjoying it, and at the end of it all Susan said 'what did you think?' 'Well, the clowns were quite good; that was all right: didn't like

that ringmaster, though, he was a bossy, hmmm, I wouldn't want him telling me what to do, no no no no, didn't like that bit.'

So they all went home, and Susan then went to report to the king and the ministers.

'So, what did you learn, Susan?'

Well, you can't please all of the people all the time. However, trying to get people to engage with something is much more difficult than I thought it was going to be.'

And the minister said 'Well that's all very well but we've spent all this money, and you only took 50 people. How are you going to get more people together?'

'Oh, I can't force them.'

'Yes you can, and you've got to get more people there before next week.'

'Oh, right,' said Susan.

So Susan went away, sat in her lonely little tower, and cried. Then she went back to them and said 'Well I can't do it on my own, I need some support.'

And they said 'OK, you can have the Minister of Arts to help you.' He was a very nice chap, but not very practical. The end.

Patrick's Story

My tale is one of great success and progress that was made within in an area of the country that is characterised by wide-open spaces, misty mornings, a relatively average level of teenage pregnancies, and just beautiful countryside, not far from a kingdom that we've previously heard of from the previous life told by another person. It came to pass where again a considerably important person decided that there was an opportunity to improve the well-being of the people in this area of the country, and he called together a group of people that could help progress this initiative. They were all film buffs, and their proper names were Mr Orange, Mr Blue, Mr Red and Mr Green, but because of their film buffness they wanted to be called Mr Partnership, Mr Consultation, Miss Thinking Outside The Box and Mr Target. They were charged with actually developing this initiative. There was a large baying crowd in the area that wanted change in any case, and I think the very

important person who was leading it up thought that something needed to be done, so he tasked these people to meet. They met and had a very brief meeting about how they would take this on board, and it was decided that they would each run off and set up sub-groups, working parties or task groups, whatever you wanted to call them, and meet again in six months, which they duly did. I ought to mention that there was also some lonely wretch sitting at the bottom of the table as well, and his title was something like, I don't know, Programme Manager,

[group laughter]

something like that. Ill-defined job description and ill-defined role, but he's of little significance to the story. The meeting reconvened at the end of six months' time and it was generally agreed that everyone should feed back. Mr Partnership came back very positive and said that he had went out and met with very many other important people who said that they would meet on a regular basis to discuss things. After six months he said that whilst the general agreement was exceedingly good, that the meetings hadn't exactly been that well attended, they'd been attended by people who were unable to make decisions, but that the most positive thing out that they had all signed up to trying to help progress this initiative and he showed a piece of paper with the signatures on it. Miss Consultation, sorry Mr Consultation again was extremely positive about the six months work that she, he had put in, and had recalled that they had went out and consulted wide and far about what the people would want in this great initiative. Six people had turned up to a meeting, but although the numbers were small, he did assure us that they were representative of the whole area, and so in that sense the consultation exercise had went very very well, and that it would continue, but that the meetings would have to have much more notice given to them in the future. Miss Thinking Outside The Box, again, was very very positive and said there had been lots of ideas come up, about how to progress the initiative, but that had been subject to some difficulties through the immediate players because of things like auditing procedures and whatnot so there hadn't been a lot of progress in terms of new little initiatives. Mr Target had said that again, they had made considerable progress on actually deciding what targets they would need to meet, but again it would be very difficult to measure in terms of

success because they weren't sure where they were starting from. The overall outcome of the six months work was clearly very very impressive and the Programme Manager who was quite taken aback by the level of success, realised that the initiative was extremely successful, that much progress had been made and he would go out and tell the people outside that despite them not having noticed very much in the past six months, that an enormous amount of work had been undertaken and an enormous amount of achievement had been achieved, and that there was very little to worry about and that things would only get better in the future if they would just sit and wait. That ends my little tale.

Rebecca's Story

Well, my story starts in a great kingdom

[group laughter]

where there was the most amazing and powerful storyteller that anyone had ever heard, and wherever this storyteller went there were great crowds of people, and always a scribe to write down every detail of the story, to make sure that not one little gem of this story was missed. And this storyteller used to spin the most amazing magical stories, the sort of stories that should have fireworks and orchestral backing, and whenever the stories finished the silence was just overwhelming. Well one day the storyteller started to tell another great and fantastic story, but a rumour started up in the crowd, that there were three new storytellers, each at the far reaches of the kingdom, but they didn't tell great and powerful stories, but they told much simpler stories, not the sort of stories that awed you into silence at the end, but the sort of stories where the whispers of the words stayed in the hearts and the minds long after the stories had finished. Well, when these rumours got to the great storyteller, the storyteller demanded that these storytellers were brought at once to the great kingdom so they could be heard for themselves, so the storyteller set a challenge, and said OK, and said to the crowd 'we will all tell a story about partnerships'. So the grand storyteller told the most amazing story about partnership with great words and phrases that were just unimaginable, words that you'd never heard before, absolutely fantastic, and

again it was the sort of story where there should be orchestral backing and fireworks and great silence at the end as it finished, and the scribe took down every word. And then the first storyteller from one end of the kingdom started their story. The scribe was there taking the words very carefully. And the first storyteller said

‘Two men went hunting together, when all of a sudden a great wild bear came upon them. The one man ran as quickly as he could and hid up in a tree away from the bear. The second man had no time to do so, but he had heard that if he lay still, very quietly, as dead as a corpse almost, that the bear wouldn’t be bothered with you. So the chap lay down on the ground and the bear came around and started sniffing, and then walked away. Well the other man came down out of the tree and said ‘that was amazing, what did the bear whisper to you?’ and the man just turned round and he said ‘well he just said that I should choose my hunting partners very carefully’.

The second storyteller began very quietly, no great drama, but the crowd were drawn towards him and he started to tell his story, of the day that the sun and the north wind were arguing. But he said how they decided that they were both as powerful as each other, and the argument went on when they saw a man walking below them, and they thought OK whoever can get the man to take off his coat is the most powerful of all. So the north wind said ‘I’ll start’ and started blowing with all his might, and he just did anything he could, whipped up a storm around this man, but all this man did was to pull his coat even tighter round him. The sun said ‘I’ll have a go’ and started very gently just to beam down a few beams. The man started to sweat and wiped his brow, and then the sun shone a little more gently, the man began to undo his scarf and his hat, and just a little more sunshine and the man just took off his coat and sat down and spread out under the sun, and it was agreed that the sun was the more powerful of the two.

The third storyteller began his story, this one was about a farmer who had five good strong sons, each who would go out in the fields to do the bits that farmer’s sons do in fields, I don’t know whether it’s something to do with pigs

or crops or whatever, but they were forever arguing, these five sons, and the farmer just didn't know what to do. And then one day he had an idea, he took a bundle of sticks up to the arguing sons, and then in turn he gave the bundle of sticks to the sons and said 'try and break these bundle of sticks' so each son tried, but couldn't break the bundle of sticks. And then the farmer undid the bundle of sticks and gave a stick to each son, and of course the sticks were broken into many pieces very quickly, and the farmer said 'sons, if you just stand together, like these sticks, then you will be much stronger.'

Well, the crowd didn't know what to make of these stories, but the scribe very carefully had written all the stories down, and the great storyteller just walked up to the scribe, took each story, folded it up very carefully, and took out a box, with seven locks, because you have to have sevens in stories I think for some reason, and undid each of the seven locks, and buried those three stories deeply inside the box, and then locked carefully each of the seven locks, and just took the box and walked away.

So, what happened to those stories? Are they there in the box, or were the rumours true, that they were the sort of stories where the words stayed in their mind and the hearts long after they'd been told?

Ta-daa!

Amy's Story

My story's called The Bridge. Jimmy Joe, Carrie, Lopear, Buster, Humphrey and Mavis, four times every day they crossed the bridge, there and home, there and home, pushing the sproglets in the wheelie, bringing home the logs, collecting the flour and syrup for pancake tea, they always stopped and looked down at the motorway, all the speeding cars, all whizzing somewhere and back, somewhere and back.

'Nice', Carrie would say, 'a lovely hum', the cars humming like bees, whizzing, busy.

'Lovely', they would all agree.

Then the sproglets would want their tea. They must have watched the cars from the bridge for many months, Jimmy Joe, Carrie, Lopear, Buster, Humphrey and Mavis, they must have stopped to watch a thousand times before the day Humphrey asked the first question.

‘Where are those cars going? Where is somewhere?’

‘Somewhere is London, they whizz to London and then they whizz back.’

Jimmy Joe knew the answer.

‘They go fast, very fast,’ said Carrie. ‘Why do they go so fast?’

‘They need to go fast to get things done quickly,’ said Jimmy Joe.

‘Are they going for logs, and flour, and sugar?’

‘I don’t really know,’ said Jimmy Joe.

The next day Humphrey asked ‘Who is in the cars?’

‘They are the people,’ said Jimmy Joe. He knew the answer.

‘Do they have sproglets in the cars?’ asked Carrie.

‘I don’t really know,’ said Jimmy Joe.

The next day and the next day the questions kept coming. When it came to most of the answers, Jimmy Joe didn’t really know. Mrs Grobbet came to the bridge one day. She tickled the sproglets and made them laugh. She knew a good way to cut logs. They swapped pancake recipes and looked down at the cars together. Mrs Grobbet explained that she worked for the people. Jimmy Joe asked all the questions, and Mrs Grobbet was able to help with the answers. The people had to whizz to London to get things done quickly. The things were decisions, about planting trees for logs, sharing flour and storing syrup. In particular they were things about sproglets.

‘We know all about that’, said Jimmy Joe, Carrie, Lopear, Buster, Humphrey and Mavis.

‘They don’t always get it right, do they?’ said Carrie. ‘They don’t stop and look at the sproglets, they go so fast. I’d like to tell them about raising a sproglet.’

‘And so would I.’

‘And so...’

‘Me too!’ they all agreed.

Then they could help them get it right. Mrs Grobbet said that was the perfect way to work, and she would help.

‘Let’s build a car and go there ourselves, to tell them what we really want. Let’s pile in all the sproglots and take them too.’

‘Car seats,’ said Mrs Grobbet.

[group laughter]

Slowly they pieced together all the bits that would make the car. People gave bits, people gave advice, people lent parts. One person was so impressed with the idea that they said they would donate all the petrol the car would need for the journey, there and back. It was a wonderful, peculiar, splendid piece of machinery, it had nine wheels, one light, three clutches and seven accelerators.

[group laughter]

Fourteen mirrors were provided by wellwishers, and a very big steering wheel seemed the best way for everybody to help with getting this wonderful creation to its destination. When they started it, it pattered, it coughed, it lumbered slowly off, it creaked, it groaned, and then it roared and soared, my heavens how it could go. Not fast, but so powerfully and determinedly, once you got it going it could never stop. They all took turns to steer it, they all had a different style of steering: to and fro, wibble wobble, jerky jump, and Mrs Grobbet in the back was shouting with excitement, ‘Go, Man, Go!’

[group laughter]

And they took it on the motorway. It lurched out of the inside lane and started to get up speed. ‘Go, Man, Go!’ The other cars went whizzing past, so fast, so fast, at first they hooted and waved to see such a wonderful and lively car on the road, such a great thing to see, such energy and drive, made of nothing really. They slowed for an instant, to see what it was and how on earth it could manage on such a big highway. Then they hooted with exasperation as the wonderful car held them all up, the queue behind grew and grew, and all the fast cars fumed and hooted with rage, the queue grew seven miles long, but the wonderful car was going it as fast as it could, flat out. The driving team had grown really slick, they could change places in an instant, each squeezing the best from the wonderful car’s performance. The queue behind grew to 11 miles long, and by now the cars in the queue were beyond patience with the wonderful car, they had somewhere to go very fast and they just couldn’t wait for the wonderful car to lead the way. One of them

just said 'hell' and whizzed past. Another followed, and another, and then the waiting queue all surged past, faster and faster, to where they wanted to go. They whipped past the wonderful car, which was spun around with the sheer force of their overtaking, it was spun and flipped and totally thrown askew by the passing cars. It was driven off the carriageway, and propelled mangled and mashed into the ditch by the side. Bits flew off all over, smoke and steam and poor tangled passengers and bruised sprogllets all crawling out to find safety on the verge. Still the cars went whizzing past, all haring off somewhere going very very fast. They all sat on the verge, patting each other for comfort and reassurance, horrible, horrible adventure, for which they'd all worked so very hard. Such a wonderful car, perfectly fine, and yet it had come to this awful end. The cars went on whizzing by. In weeks to come, they stopped on the bridge again to see cars whizzing, cars whizzing, in the ditch a bit of tangled machinery, Mrs G there on the verge, still trying to collect together any usable bits, and waving up to them whenever she found something that seemed serviceable. And they would always wave back. They wouldn't build another wonderful car again, so the bits weren't important. They always waved back, though. They knew she needed the encouragement.

That's my story.

Joe's Story

I guess, I was having a chat with our two vice-chairs at a partnership board recently over a cup of coffee, and we were having a little talk about a story I'd heard in a training session some months ago, and it was all about three people who were building, and the first was laying stones and bricks and he was fairly fed up with himself but he knew he had to work hard to earn his keep and keep his family. And the second was really keen to do a great job, because he took a fair amount of pride in his work, and he was laying these stones in a pretty marvellous way and doing a really good job and he got a lot of pride out of that. And then the third kind of knew that actually he was building a cathedral, and because of that he felt very very motivated to do a good job, because it was something that he believed in. Anyway, after telling

this tale, one of the vice-chairs of the partnership board said 'mmm, well what if you don't believe in God?' And another one said 'mmm, well what if actually you believe in God and you want to build a cathedral, but you're a lousy builder?' And then after further discussion, we kind of agreed that at times it's felt as though some of our aspirations were around building a cathedral, but that somebody else perhaps in another part of the city may belong to a different denomination or a different religion and want a different kind of building, and the long and the short of it was that perhaps the government has already in some respects decided to convert our cathedral into a Wetherspoons before the building has actually finished, and that our children's centre has become a childcare centre. So that was pretty much how our conversation had ended.

Cath's Story

OK well I was having a little think as I drove here and I thought well, what's it all about, working in partnership, so there was, I suppose like once upon a time, a rabbit that lived in a little leafy glade in the forest, and she had a family with her, and they were very happy, and they lived there for quite a while, they had everything that they wanted. And in that glade as well there were other animals and insects that lived there, small, and they all relied on one another, they all worked together and, you know, a little bit like the ladybird helped the ants and all of that and there was plenty for all of them in this glade, and one day this, and I don't know whether, I couldn't quite think my mind went, it was funny, like, is it a herd of ponies, or a troop of ponies came from a nearby forest, you see, which these animals, the rabbit and them, they hadn't ventured into, because they were quite happy there. Anyway, these came over and the leader of these ponies, a little bit like the New Forest ponies, said that they'd been given orders to clear their forest and because it was going to be taken over, they didn't know by who, or what, but orders had come from on high that they'd got to clear this forest and find another place to live, so they wanted to turn these out of this glade, you see, and take over. And they came in, and Mother Rabbit tried to speak to them and tell them that this glade, they were willing to share this glade, but they

were such big animals, if they just came in all they would do, they would trample it all down, and all the extended families, and everything they'd got down there, and they'd all lived so happily together, they would just be crushed, and there would be no way of getting them back into that family. Well the leader of the ponies said that he'd got to do this, he'd got to clear his forest, and there was no way he could back down from that, and he'd only got a certain amount of time to do that, so they had meeting after meeting to try and discuss what they were going to do about the ponies. Those in the glade, well, they knew full well they'd got to go somewhere if they were being told that they'd got to go, so what they decided to do was, Mother Rabbit said, a little bit like Chicken Licken when she was going to see the king, to tell the king that the sky was falling down, she got all of her little gladey people together and they set off with a message and the leader of the ponies said 'we can't come with you, because we've got our orders to clear our forest, but we'll give you a certain length of time to go and speak to the people on high' who had given them those orders, and it had come down this chain, and so this is where the story ends, because Mother Rabbit then set off on this journey from her glade to those on high, and on the way she took with her a little army, she left some behind to protect the glade, and then she set on her way, and what she's hoping for is that she'd be able to pick up more as she goes through the forest that the ponies have come through, right up to the people on high who have given the ponies the order. And that's my story.

Sadie's Story

I want you to close your eyes, imagine a room about the size of this room, at one end there is like a big plasma screen on the wall, and some computers and a desk and all sorts of gadgets and things in front of it, and at the other end there's practical things like there's a sink, there's a bed that comes down from the wall, a couple of other things, practical items at the other end. And in the middle there's a chap, a man called Peter 265, and he's just getting terribly frustrated at the moment and he's screaming at this plasma screen: 'You've got to be joking, I can't believe you're bloody going to do this again to us,' sharing all his frustrations with the computer, but knowing full well that his

friend, George 148 at the other end, is not actually going to hear this, because the problem is these computers change the words that he's saying, so when Peter's swearing and cursing and shouting, actually what George at the other end of the computer hears is purely 'I don't feel at this time we can change the system'. You see the difficulty is, they're in a world of machines, and these machines, they're all isolated, and all the people are kind of isolated in separate rooms, they've got no windows, they've got no way of communicating with each other apart from through these machines, so now when you sit with your eyes closed, that's how he feels all the time when he's in this darkened room, with just this screen and computer in front of him. George speaks back to him, but he knows full well that the message that comes back, 'I completely agree with you,' says George, he knows full well that that has lost all its intonation in the voice, it's lost all the emotion, and actually that is probably not what George is really saying. You see, Peter and George are the only two guys that remember what it used to be like when humans could actually talk to each other, when you could actually tell each other what we were feeling, they had different tones in their voice, they had joy and frustration, they had anger, they had happiness, they had sadness, but at those times they could actually share that emotion with each other, whereas now the computers have stripped them away of that. What's happening today is that the system's changing, Peter's in charge of the systems, he's a kind of computer programmer and he fiddles with all the systems and he changes it and he analyses data just to make sure that the system works, and he's just been told that it's changing, but he feels that, even though he was aware that that was going to happen, that he couldn't really do anything about it, and he wanted to have an input because he's the one who's going to have to be doing it at the end of the day, he's the one who's having to be inputting the data and changing the system, and changing it so that now not only has all the emotion been stripped away from the voices, but actually the voice itself, so everyone is just going to have this automated voice through the computers. So Peter's sat there really getting terribly frustrated and desperately wanting to break out of it all, desperately wanting to talk to somebody else, but knowing that he can't, and he knows that George is at the other end feeling in exactly the same frustration. I

guess that's where it stops, the story, now, because that's today, and that's the situation that Peter feels that he's in at the moment, knowing that something's going to change, and knowing that he's going to have to change the computers and input the data, but actually tomorrow he's no idea what's going to happen.

Bob's Story

Two villages, either side of a river, and there was a bridge, and the bridge was very old and very rickety, but it worked, and people were okay with it, and they moved between the two villages. And the mayor of one village and the mayor of the other village had a daughter and a son, and they used to meet on the bridge, and they fell in love, and they wanted to get married. So they decided that they would get married, and as part of this ceremony, the mayor on one side said he would build a better bridge, or he would put money towards building a better bridge, to make it so that it was easier to move between the two villages. So he went ahead and did this, so the mayor on the other side decided he wasn't going to be outdone by this, so he got some money together and he said he would build part of the bridge as well. So they had to work together, building this bridge. And the plans started to get bigger and bigger, and they were going to have shops on the bridge, and then they were going to have a cinema on the bridge, and they were going to have all sorts of other things on the bridge. And the money went up and up and up, both sides were trying to outdo each other, really, the couple in the middle were quite happy but both sides were sort of 'I'm going to do better than the other one'. Then the bridge started being built, so they knocked down the old bridge and started building this big new bridge and it had all these shops and offices, all these big things on it, it was getting bigger than the village, really. And both villages were trying to say 'well we put more money into this, we put more money into this, we should have this, and we want this' and both sides were beginning to fall out. The couple in the middle were still very happy, you know, going ahead with the wedding and thinking about what they wanted to do, but each side were beginning to get more and more tense, and it was like 'well we want this' and then they would say 'well

no we want that' and the bridge got stuck when it was half done and it wasn't really finished. And then this stranger arrived in the village, because he'd heard all about this and he was quite interested in what they were trying to do, because it was a very different type of bridge, they'd never really built bridges like this before. No-one knew who this bloke was, he just arrived, and was looking at the plans and making suggestions and being very helpful, really, trying to bring the two together and trying to get them to think 'well actually you're both putting money in, you know, you should both get something out of this' and trying to get them to think about what they were doing, and it started again, the building started again, and more and more people were saying 'oh yes, well there are some good ideas here, we can have different things on this bridge, and people can use the bridge in different ways'. Then someone came up with the idea that they could charge people for using the bridge, and if they actually started charging for using the bridge they could put even more on this bridge. Then they had to work out who they would charge, so did one village charge the other village for coming across it to get to the other side, or did the other side charge the other side for coming across, and where did all this money go? Who controlled all this money? Because the mayor on one side said it was his idea in the first place, so he should have all the money. Then the mayor on the other side said well we're putting in as much so we should have the money. Then they started to argue about the money, and the bridge went, it didn't get, it just got stuck again. And the stranger was trying to negotiate, trying to bring all these people together to work on this idea. And the couple were still in the middle, and they still hadn't got married, and they were still getting a bit frustrated, but they were still quite happy. And then the stranger went away again, and left them all to think about it and worry about it, and then he came back again with some more ideas, but he also came back with some money, and he started to say 'well actually if we put this money in, and I'll do this and I'll do that' and then the bridge started being built again. The builders were coming along, and they were getting a bit fed up and nobody was actually doing anything, so the stranger came in and said 'yeah, we'll do this'. And then lots of other people started to arrive and think 'ooh this is really good' and they started taking photographs of it, and television cameras, and people were

really getting very excited about this big idea, this really big bridge that had lots of different things on it that no-one had ever thought about before. And gradually the two villages started to lose interest in it, and this stranger began to take over, and gradually more and more the bridge got built, and then they put tolls on it, both villages had to pay, it had (inaudible) the two villages, because he started to put everything under his control and he built the bridge up and it was all in his control, everything that happened happened somewhere else, and the two villages were left with this lovely bridge, lots of things going on on it, but they had to pay to use it, and the couple, unfortunately, when the bridge had been built, one day she walked across the bridge and she fell off and she drowned, and they never got married. But this lovely bridge was built, and the two villages had this lovely bridge which they had to pay to cross over, and someone somewhere else made all the money.

Simon's Story

Well thank you very much for coming along to listen to my story. I hope it enlightens you in terms of what it feels like to be a programme manager, and my role within that. So, I'll start by saying that as a programme manager I think it's a very rewarding, yet challenging, and at times a very frustrating role to have. It also can be quite isolating in so much as the fact that you work with a whole range of individuals from the whole different sectors, different fields, different backgrounds, training and experiences, and yet for all you're their programme manager and so not their peer, and at times it feels that you're working against all the odds because everybody's so negative in some respects and yet other people can be so very positive at the same time and it's that positivity that keeps me going and making sure that we're doing a good job.

I'd like to link this story to that of a circus, and I'll try my best to try and weave some kind of feeling into it. So, the circus for me is about at times having to spin so many plates as a programme manager, competing priorities, all the timescales that we have to work towards, the deadlines, so at some stage you have all the plates spinning, and I can picture the plates as being red,

and blue, and yellow, and green, and plastic, and china, and a whole range of different materials, and they're all really going well, and the plates are spinning at such a pace, it's at that time that you think 'I know we're doing a really good job', because there's no wobbles among the plates, even though the china ones are looking a little cracked and a little fragile around the edges, we still have them spinning, and it's at that point that you know you're doing really well. Until somebody steps in with a new directive, a new initiative, a new piece of work to be involved with the work that we're doing in the programme, and it's at that point that those edges on those plates get sharper and sharper, and the cracks get deeper and deeper, and the plates eventually do drop. And when they drop, do they drop onto a rubber mat, in so much as the fact that they're not going to shatter, or do they drop onto a concrete surface? And if they drop onto a concrete surface, then it's at that point that you know that everything you stood for, all the work that you did, all the visionary stuff, all the negotiation, all those things, is going to come crashing down, with the vision that you set out linked back to the vision that we had for our partnership working.

However, that said, coming back to the circus and the big top, there's also work to be done around managing the pace, and working in our town can sometimes be quite difficult in so much as the fact that you have lots of commitment and lots of energy wanting to work in partnership, lots of people who are very keen from a whole range of different agencies to work with you because you have resources and you have credibility in the brand of Sure Start, but then actually negotiating, engaging, and setting up one agenda can sometimes be very difficult, and that's where I link it back to those spinning plates. The plastic plates spin round very quickly because you know if they drop off 'oh well, it's a risk that we all had to take', but the china plates, are for me, the ones that are a little bit more fragile and very difficult to deal with.

Juggling different styles, again linking back to the circus under the big top, can be very difficult because a whole range of colleagues have different backgrounds, different understandings of what a Sure Start programme happens to be. One of the things that I've found to be interesting was a

couple of months ago when I spoke to a seconded worker from a health perspective and when I was speaking to her, she was saying 'It would be useful, Simon, at some point, if we could just talk about what the targets are for Sure Start'. She'd been in post for 18 months and that to me was a little interesting, to think that after 18 months when all the work we do is linked to targets, linked to milestones, linked to every aspect you can think of, she still wasn't particularly sure about what her role was within that context. So that for me was interesting. Balancing priorities, again, coming back to the circus theme, if we're doing a balancing act and if we're doing it really well you can walk along the tightrope pretty steadily and very confidently holding bottles of water and trays of glasses, whatever else, that's fine, but actually if you have other people that are prodding you from the side saying 'no, this is not going to work', or 'this is going to work,' or 'you need to do this, you need to do that. can you come and talk to a bunch of councillors about something else', those are the things that for me are very very challenging. And recently I've been working closely with the local education authority because of a member of staff being on secondment and what I've found is that balancing those priorities is being even greater, so much so that for me I'm very glad that now I'm back to running a Sure Start programme and not doing other things, because those priorities, whilst I'm very committed to the work that we've all been doing, has been very difficult, and the things I've just talked about, like coming along to talk to a bunch of councillors, or can you enlighten about this policy, can you write a draft around this area, is great, and it's lovely, that we can make that contribution, but again, thinking of it in a broader sense, there is only so much that one individual can do, and I think as an isolated programme manager, it makes it very difficult to have that regular support that we need outside of our own level when other managers don't quite understand the complexities or the priorities or the work that we have to do as a Sure Start programme.

That said, stilt-walking is some of the things that we have to do, that we have to put our heads way above the crowds, in terms of, I'm thinking now of the big top and I'm thinking that linking it to a council chamber, you're talking about what the Children's Trust priorities could be, for example, but

everybody's making a pitch, and it's not necessarily the one that has. that makes the most sense that wins the day, I've found that it's the person that makes the most noises, and the person that's most consistent with their approach, and in the county we've been very fortunate that we've made quite a lot of noises, and in terms of the next stage of Government policy we are part of the priorities for the local authority, and I'm very very pleased that myself and a colleague who is also a programme manager within the county has been able to win that over with the local authority.

Okay. Emotionally it is incredibly draining. You almost feel that you've got a very very steep hill to climb and a very large ball, concrete ball, to push up that very steep hill. But actually from a spectator's point of view we make it look quite easy, that we can, we have the audience, we have the applause, sometimes we stand up for that applause and we soak it up and enjoy it, and there's other times that you think 'is that applause genuine, or is it because somebody's told them they need to clap?' And that's some of the ways in which it feels for me as a programme manager. However, that said, there are so many positive things that have come out of the influential roles that we hold, the way in which we are contributing to the transformation of services for children and families, and if you think of that big top and all the audience that's in there, predominantly there's going to be families with young children, there's going to be people who are keen on coming to watch it, there's going to be others that are cynics who have been dragged along to come along and be part of that audience, but actually at the end of the day when everybody walks out of the big top, laughing and having a joke and filling their faces with healthy snacks and all the things that we find

[group laughter]

it's really quite good that we've been able to facilitate that whole process.

Okay. In terms of from a strategic point of view, I've talked very much about operationally how it feels as a programme manager and also emotionally how it feels, but actually when we're talking about a transformation agenda, are we one voice that's in a corner saying 'we are transforming the way services are delivered to children and families'? And sometimes it can feel very much

like that, because although the Unit has given us the licence to say that's what underpins our work as a Sure Start local programme, now children's centre, but in some respects these local authorities and central government and others, they haven't quite caught on to that, so for us it's more about saying 'the role can be straightforward if we have one central vision'. We've been given, in our county, licence to make that vision a reality, by having the work of Sure Start as part of the children's trust priorities, that is going to mean that we're pushing against an open door, well one that's ajar, maybe, rather than fully open, but at least we have a very receptive local authority structures and children's trust partners made up of a whole range of people that can make our jobs so much easier.

In terms of working in partnership, I'm sorry if I'm jumping around, but in terms of working in partnership, I can't think of anything negative to bring to the story, but what I can bring, what I can think of, is the fact that the health partners, the local authorities, because we're in a two-tier authority, the local authorities and the main authority, have all been very receptive to Sure Start local programmes and now children's centres, and I think that into the future is going to make it much easier for us as we again work towards children's trust priorities. There are so many opportunities, and I think that one of the things I would like to stress as part of my story, bringing back to the circus, is that when you have a whole range of players in a circus, be that jugglers, be that stilt-walkers, be that people who are spinning plates, if we all work together and have the philosophy of wanting to entertain our audience, and make things better, then I think really we can have that shared agenda. And it's not about the tightrope walker that's any better than the stilt-walker or the juggler, essentially we're all there to entertain. I think if we apply that in the context of the Sure Start local programme, that's where we can make the success. So we need to let go of thinking that somebody, as a professional or otherwise, is any better than the admin worker, the clerical support or the caretaker. That's my story. Thank you for listening.

Luke's Story

I don't feel that my story is in any way as comprehensive as the previous one, or as wide-ranging as the one that we've just heard, and it's more a personal and emotional process of what happens as a programme manager, or some of the things that can happen to the programme manager, really, and it's called The Pooh Collection which is an interesting title but hopefully might come clearer as we go through. As programme manager, there's an enormous amount to do, and one of the things I try to do as much as possible is to put time into the staff, and try, at the beginning when they start as a group, to give them the vision and give them the idea and the focus of what Sure Start's all about. And to the end of this, I got involved in the induction process for some of our nursery nurses, and this was a getting to know you process, a sort of welcome to Sure Start and this is what we're about and this is what we do. And introduced a sort of exercise, one of those things where you try to get to know a bit more about people, and it was the usual thing 'give us your favourite holiday destination, tell us four things about yourself: your favourite holiday destination, your favourite food, your favourite drink and maybe your most treasured possession'. And it went around the group of nursery nurses, talking about different bits and pieces, what they like to drink, where they like to go on holiday, and eventually came to one member of staff who'd been quite quiet all the way through the process, hadn't really got particularly involved with the rest of the group, and she talked about holidays in Spain, she talked about her fondness for chocolate, how she felt she was a little bit addicted to diet Coke. Then when it came to the treasured object, she said 'my most treasured possession is my pooh collection'. And facilitating this, this was a terrible moment for me, where everything whirled before me, and it was like 'god where are we going with this, what is this going to be about?'. And it was just I suppose a bit of a Sarah Jessica Parker moment, when you think mmm, and if you think to yourself 'in my life as a programme manager what would be your pooh moments, what would be in your pooh collection for the Sure Start, managing Sure Start?'. And so, reflecting on some of the things that have happened, and how I felt about them, and I suppose that one of the first things that came into my mind was, I suppose it must have been about two weeks into actually running the programme, and it was the first occasion where we'd met the parents at the

PAGs, when we'd gone there, put food on for the parents, were all sat down and talking to them. All of a sudden the mobile phone went, and it was a phone call saying 'the nursery's on fire'. (laughs) Two weeks into the job! And straight away dashed into the car with the centre's manager, rushed over to the nursery, which was truly on fire, the kitchen was well and truly on fire, the fire brigade was there, they'd evacuated the children out, and I was thinking 'god how am I going to explain this to anyone?' and the centre's manager turned to me and said 'don't worry about it, it's the second time it's happened, almost the third', so obviously it wasn't one of those things that happened rarely. It's just one of those emotionally scary things. We solved the problem by removing the cooker and not having a cooker in the building.

Other things that make you want to say 'oh pooh', I suppose, was the day of the OFSTED inspection, and those are always very emotionally charged days, one way or another. You've got to get it right, you've got to be out there, you've got to make this whole thing work for everybody, and show the inter-agency working, and how well you're working with all these other agencies. The day had gone splendidly and the OFSTED inspector was in the back room talking to some of the parents and we were so confident that we'd said 'off you go, talk to the parents, we don't mind at all', and we went into the front office, and it was almost the end of the process, when all of a sudden two of the team workers rushed in and said 'do you want the bad news or do you want the bad news?' and I said 'fuck, tell me' and apparently the contractors at the front had just put their JCB through the mains gas.

[group laughter]

We rushed outside and the whole place stank of natural gas, the whole place absolutely reeked of it. And everybody was looking at me to, what should we do, we have an OFSTED inspector at the back with parents, we have a nursery full of children, and there's only one way off the site, and that's through the gate where they've just ruptured the main gas main. And actually there isn't any way out of this site, it's been built in such a way that there's no way of getting anyone out. The situation, as these things often do, solved itself with one of the contractors stuffing a t-shirt into the main gas pipe and saying 'don't worry, mate, it happens all the time'.

[group laughter]

So there's a lot of these things that happen, all these general 'oh my god' moments. I suppose some of them are relocating your family to a new area that you don't know particularly well, and you still haven't got anywhere for them to live and it's five days from when they're going to come down, that's quite stressful in certain ways. But there's the endless visits from the great and the good, who want to show off the great partnership working and how wonderful it all comes together, and these things have always got to go smoothly, they have to work well. Last time, I don't know how it happened, but five minutes before the children's minister was about to arrive on site, two of the children were playing in the hall, managed to topple over a table-tennis table and managed to crush themselves under it and were taken screaming and bleeding, literally, back into the nursery for first aid and comfort. And of course in the panic no-one had noticed the children's blood on the floor of the nursery, and this trail that the children's minister was just about to go and see.

[group laughter]

Fortunately someone grabbed a mop and a bucket and cleaned it up just in time, before she walked through. Then there's the other moments where parents just lose it completely, again on a big visit with the director from Sure Start, one parent was found outside the building completely sobbing, and screaming at the children, in great concern, and was once again moved away and put in a quiet room and dealt with. And I was thinking 'well somehow we're not dealing with the real things, we're dealing with the needs of the dignitaries and the partnership rather than the needs of families'.

Some situations are a bit less obvious and immediate, like the personal hells that some of the colleagues I work with have gone through, the suffering they've gone through in their lives with life-threatening illnesses for themselves and their partners, and how they've continued to work with great courage and great pride, and how nice it is to work with people who are so stoic and strong and rooted in what it is that they're doing. And then there's other staff who maybe don't adopt change quite as well as you'd like them to,

and probably deport themselves in slightly less positive manners. and it's just taking the difference between those two staff groups. really.

But those very few seconds when Daisy mentioned about her pooh collection, all this rushed through my mind. But then a voice came from another nursery nurse who had worked with her before, and she said 'oh. Daisy, you mean your Winnie the Pooh collection?' and it was like 'yes! Suddenly it all makes sense!' From a child, Daisy had collected little models of Winnie the Pooh, plates of Winnie the Pooh, mugs of Winnie the Pooh, fabrics with Winnie the Pooh on it, anything related to Winnie the Pooh. And I suppose that just makes me muse a little bit on the situation that we find ourselves in now with Sure Start, and how the project's moved and grown, and really how those different characters, those lovely woodland chums of our childhood, how they could possibly fit into the senior management team that we have at the moment. I can certainly recognise a number of Eeyores

[group laughter]

and I always loved the bit when Eeyore decides, so he won't lose his tail again, that he'll walk backwards forever so his tail will always be in front, and I think we can see some of that behaviour. Certainly I feel that I'm managed by a Piglet who is always very keen to

[brief interruption by a member of venue staff]

So, yes, and who else have we got? Heads sometimes can behave like Pooh, just more interested in chasing the honey, and in the process seem to get their head stuck in the jar, and bumble around not really seeing the whole picture. Seem to be short of some wise owls sometimes, I feel. And as a programme manager I still feel that I'm tied into the role of Tigger, always bouncing, head made out of rubber, tail made out of springs. But maybe I need to remove some of those roles to try and move those woodland characters out of the happy Hundred Acre Wood of the local authority and the PCTs into what might be the new future. That's my story, hope it's been interesting and entertaining to you.

Fred's Story

OK, well what this possibly requires is some prior knowledge of the. I've decided to tweak a modern myth, the King Kong story, has everybody seen the film at least once? Or are familiar with the outline of King Kong. OK, well once upon a time King Kong as we're aware picking up the tale at the end where the story reached in the well-known movie, Kong 'died' in inverted commas falling from the skyscraper in New York, I think a combination of wounds from the shots from the aeroplanes and the impact in hitting the ground. However, what isn't generally known is that he actually wasn't killed at the end of the film, and the woman who he had taken a shine to, who was in the palm of his hand when he fell, whose name I can't remember but who I will refer to as the actor's name, Fay Wray, who died this year in fact, Fay Wray was clearly upset at the apparent death of Kong and she actually negotiated with the authorities to have custody of Kong who as I say everybody thought was dead, but she happened to know an eminent scientist called Dr Frankie Stein

[group laughter]

who was a female biologist, top in her field, who actually was interested in, unlike her near namesake Dr Frankenstein, as opposed to making large monsters she'd been privately working on a means of reducing creatures in size. So, between them, Fay Wray and Dr Frankie Stein worked on King Kong, and managed to reduce King Kong, as well as restoring King Kong to full and active health, managed to restore him to more or less the same size as an average human being, but given the controversial figure that King Kong had been, they decided that they had to observe a certain amount of secrecy, and in order to preserve his new identity King Kong had to shave from head to toe every single day, and take certain tablets devised by Dr Frankie Stein to ensure that he remained an average human size. And in the course of time Kong and Fay Wray married, and lived ostensibly happily in New York for a while, and as a result of the marriage two children were born, twins in fact, a boy and a girl, and it's not important to the story but they christened the boy Fuelrod and the girl Meltdown.

[group laughter]

After a while, though, experiencing just what life was like in the belly of a different sort of beast, in New York, Kong thought back to his days on the

island that he'd been captured from originally, and began to reconstruct in his mind some of the values and lifestyle that he recalled from the island, and he basically decided that he would like to relocate his family back to the island, and in particular he was very concerned about Fuelrod and Meltdown growing up in New York, and he remembered that the children on the island where he had been raised, that the society there had been basically very happy, and that from birth children were fed on the extract of a certain plant, they were given the juice of this particular plant that as far as he knew only grew on that particular island. So he was very keen to take them, to locate his family back there. Meanwhile, Fay was not quite so, her experience of the island had been very different and she didn't really want to go back there, and also she'd been getting quite close to Dr Frankie Stein, so what in fact happened was that Fay and Dr Frankie Stein got it together and formed a relationship, it was all very amicably negotiated but Kong decided that nonetheless he would take Fuelrod and Meltdown back to the island, and they would keep in touch with Fay and Dr Stein etcetera but that's really where he thought the children would be best off. So he returned to the island, still shaving every single day head to toe to preserve his new identity and taking the tablets, he got back to the island and as a result of the film King Kong what he discovered was that the island was now populated by all sorts of people from all over the world, it had become a bit of a tourist attraction then it had built up into, people had moved there to live, so a very different place in a lot of ways, except that he discovered that the plant was still there and that some people on the island still had access to the plant and were extracting the juice and giving it to children, children were growing up extremely physically healthy and with good strong emotional health as well as a result of this plant juice. And he immediately tapped into that for Fuelrod and Meltdown and brought the children up as best as he could given the resources of the island etcetera. Eventually the children, when they reached 18 they decided that they'd like to discover other parts of the world and arrange to go and visit their mum, Fay, in New York who was still happily living with Dr Stein, so off they went, and having spent a lot of his time and energy bringing up the twins, Kong then started to think 'well I'll try and apply some of this to looking at the children on the island in general', because quite

a lot were growing up under the influence of the juice of the plant, but some weren't, and there were a few problems emerging, so Kong anyway convinced the political leaders in the island that he could have a useful role in bringing up the children of the island, and what he did was to ensure that the extract, the juice of the plant, was available to all the children on the island, and in a fairly short space of time it became known as really quite an idyllic place for children to grow up, and children grew up in great physical and emotional health. This didn't go unnoticed by the wider powers that be in the outside world, however, and as the problems in various parts of the world multiplied and got worse and worse, and in particular the American government did quite a bit of secret research into what was so different about life in the island, why certain problems just didn't seem to happen there, they decided that because it was important for them to control all natural resources in the world, that the biggest natural resource, they'd gone through oil and all those sorts of things, but the greatest natural resource was the life and energy of children, so they decided to invade the island to make use of this extremely good strong source of well-developed, well-nurtured children. So they invaded the island with the aim of achieving this, and life for the inhabitants of the island changed dramatically for the worse. In the course of invading, of course they actually succeeded in killing the plant that was responsible for the juice that was in turn responsible for children's health and well-being, and the situation, various things were tried by the local people and by Kong in a leadership position to try and reverse some of the impact of this, they went through all the various ways of trying to resist, but in the end Kong felt the only thing that he could do was to stop taking the tablets, stop shaving, and that had the effect of him reverting to the King Kong figure that we know from the original film, and of course this generated quite a confrontation with the invading US forces, and Kong was, the only recourse that he had at the end was to, he gathered all the children on the island and took them to the mountain at the centre of the island and took them up the island to try and protect them from the invading forces. It became a big stand-off situation with international attention completely focused on it, obviously. In the course of the stand-off stage, because of course the American forces weren't keen to attack Kong instantly because some of the

children might be seen to be hurt in this process, and as part of the negotiations Fay and Dr Frankie Stein and Fuelrod and Meltdown came over from America, involved in the negotiations, ended up actually joining Kong, went over to stand alongside Kong, and in fact at the very top of the mountain they did manage to find the one remaining small plantation of the vital plant that was still in existence on the island, that hadn't been completely eradicated, and this obviously helped the children who were up there with Kong for a short period of time. But eventually, when no other negotiations could work, the US decided that there was nothing left for it, they had to have this hugely important natural resource of the life-force and the energy of children, and so they did move in to attack, and sadly in the course of the assault by the Americans, who had developed far better technology than they had in the original film where just a few bi-planes were circling around Kong at the top of the Empire State Building or whatever it was, Kong was this time was killed in the attack, as were Fay Wray, Dr Frankie Stein and the twins. Some of the children were killed in fact as well in the assault. But some of the children, probably the majority of the children, survived, because the US were at least trying to ensure that they didn't kill too many of them in the course of the attack, and they were all then captured by the Americans, obviously, and taken back to America, taken back to different countries in the world, and it was a sad ending for Kong and his family and so on. What did happen, however, is that the children had become aware of the importance of the juice, when they found the small plantation at the top of the mountain, and those children who were carted off against their wishes all around the different countries of the world, did at least take the seeds of the plant with them, and those seeds were then cultivated in all sorts of different parts of the world, America, all the different parts of cultures and areas of the world that the children ended up in, and that's the end of the story.

Elaine's Story

My story is a fairy tale, and it's set in a land that is a little bit like the shires – Yorkshire and Devonshire – but also the shires where the hobbits live, but it's where the pixies live. And there are lots of pixies living in the shires. most of

them get on quite well with one another, but from time to time they have to get ready for a range of pixie events. And one day one of the pixies who had to organise events was told that they were going to have a visit from a very special person, and she had to go round and get everyone ready for the visit. So she travelled round to the parts of the shires where she knew the people who would be interested in the visitor were, and talked to them about the impending visit. Some of the pixies were really keen to get involved with the visit, and wanted to spend time with the pixie who was planning it, but other pixies said 'well, you know, we've had a lot of these recently, and we've got other things on; in fact, we'd rather just play in the shires and have fun, because it's summer, and we don't really want to get ready for a visitor'. But the pixie who had to organise the visit persuaded them that this person that was coming along was very important and that it would be worthwhile for them to be there and perhaps to talk to this person and to learn from them. So gradually the pixies became involved in the process of the visit, and they approached it in different ways, and there was a little bit of pixie competition going on. Some of them thought they'd decorate the areas that they were responsible for, some thought they'd get their gardens ready, and others thought that they would build new exciting structures for the visitor to go and have a look at. And some of the pixies still said 'well we'll do it, but we don't really want to, and I'm not really sure about that person who is organising the visit, I don't know how she got to, how did she get to be the organiser, why isn't it me?' Anyway, the organiser got busier and busier and busier, and she decided to set up a little room that everybody could come and see her in, so she set that up with some of her friends, so that it was easier for the other pixies to come along and spend some time. She got very comfortable in her little room, and she started decorating it, put some pictures up, sprinkled some magic dust around, spent more and more time in that room, and less and less time out with the other pixies who were getting ready for the visit, but she was pretty certain from the people that came and spoke to her that things were going okay out there. Just before the week of the visit, it was a Friday night, and the pixie was very very tired. She worked quite late on into the Friday evening, with her friends in the office, and they all went home for their pixie Friday nights. Some of them went out with other pixies and had lots of

pixie juice, and others stayed in and watched some pixie movies. All were fast asleep in their pixie beds when the phone rang at about five o'clock in the morning, and everything had been destroyed, they'd taken away all the machines that kept all the information about what everybody was doing, and they'd broken down all the doors, smashed all the windows, and really had caused a lot of damage in the pixie office. The pixie who was organising the visit didn't know what was most important to do. Was it most important to get the room back, all the equipment back in, everything back into place, or was it more important to go out and spend time with the people who were getting ready for the visit, and ignore the disaster and mess back in her office? So she decided to set a day aside to get the office back together again, and she went in. Some of the other pixies were really upset with all of the mess that had been caused by the pixie burglars, and some of them were really upset because a lot of their machinery had been taken away with all the information on it, and they didn't really quite know what to do, because normally they sat in front of it like this [tapping on table as if on a keyboard] all day long, and when they got in and it wasn't there, they really didn't quite know what to do with the time. The phones were off, the machines were gone, and that distressed some pixies, because they weren't used to having a day when they didn't use the equipment that was around them. But by the end of that first day, because they were very organised pixies, most of the things were put back together again and they could get on with the job in hand. But the pixie who was organising the visit then went out to visit all of the other people who were getting ready, with their structures and their gardens and the various things they were getting ready for the visit, and she realised that they'd all made a real effort for this visit, and she wasn't sure that the visitor was going to appreciate quite all of these structures and all of this effort that had been put into it. So they decided to have a party around all the structures and around all the gardens, they thought 'well actually we'll have our own event, we'll make it a party so that the visitor will come to the party for a while and then they'll go away, and the visit won't be the main event'. So that meant more organisation, so back they went to the little room, got everybody involved in that, and set up a party as well. And then on the day of the visit the visitor arrived and went round to various structures, and actually

some of the people who hadn't been interested really enjoyed the visit and enjoyed the time they spent with this very important person, and some of the people who had spent a lot of time building structures and having a party, weren't really that interested in the visitor at all and actually enjoyed the party and all the effort that they'd put into getting ready for the day, and the visitor was just there but not really the main event. But afterwards all the pixies said 'can we please not have as many of these big special occasions, we like pixieland the way it is, really, and we're not sure that we need to have quite so many people coming round to see us any more'. So they decided that they would only have these special visitors perhaps once or twice a year, and the rest of the time they would have parties, which is what they'd really enjoyed, and events just for themselves to enjoy quietly on a sunny afternoon. Thank you.

Appendix 5 – Numerical Details of Initial Stories and Discussions

Participant/group	Approximate initial story length	Approximate initial story plus discussion length	Number of words in initial story	Number of words in initial story plus discussion
Pam – Shire	3 mins 30 secs	40 mins	614	5993
Patrick – Shire	5 mins 15 secs	40 mins	728	5246
Rebecca – Shire	7 mins 0 secs	40 mins	957	5258
Amy – Shire	7 mins 30 secs	40 mins	1073	5346
Joe – City	2 mins 20 secs	22 mins	320	3014
Cath – City	4 mins 0 secs	40 mins	622	5516
Sadie – City	3 mins 20 secs	33.5 mins	657	4127
Bob – City	5 mins 20 secs	31 mins	1079	4145
Simon – Borders	11 mins 10 secs	40 mins	1999	7024
Luke – Borders	10 mins 50 secs	40 mins	1689	6723
Fred – Borders	15 mins 45 secs	40 mins	1771	5390
Elaine – Borders	6 mins 35 secs	36.5 mins	1220	6717

Total number of words in initial stories: 12,729

Total number of words in initial stories and discussions: 64,499

Appendix 6 – Codes Discussed in Chapter 5,
Thematic Interpretation, from the First Coding Frame

(NB: this appendix does not include all codes from the first coding frame)

Code Name	Meaning	No. Of Times Used
Challenging	Requiring full use of abilities and resources in a demanding and stimulating situation	18
Communication	The exchange of e.g. information, thoughts or feelings via e.g. writing, speech or behaviour	30
Concealment	To hide from view, observation or discovery	20
Conflicting agendas	Where the agenda of one person, group or organisation conflicts with another in a partnership context	28
Control	Text shows one person, group or organisation controlling another person, group or organisation	77
Emergency	An unexpected situation requiring urgent action	12
Hierarchy	A perceived or actual grading of organisations, departments, groups and/or individuals according to status	34
Imposed solution	Solution to a perceived problem imposed by a person, group or organisation outside the 'problem' situation	14
Language	Communication of thoughts, feelings and perceptions, using sounds (e.g. speech) or symbols (e.g. writing)	21
Leadership	The activity of leading, or the ability to lead	33
Perception	How something is viewed by an individual, group or organisation	65
Performance	The act of performing before an audience	31
Power	The ability to exercise control, strength or force	63
Powerless	Without power, lacking power	16
Social engineering	A process by which the Government uses its power to try to change aspects of society	9
Technology	Electronic or digital products and systems	16

**Appendix 7 – Codes Discussed in Chapter 5,
Thematic Interpretation, from the Second Coding Frame**

(NB: this appendix does not include all codes from the second coding frame)

Code Name	Meaning	Number Of Times Used
Amusement	To feel delight at being entertained	113
Anger	To feel or express anger	5
Appreciation	Grateful recognition of someone or something	20
Boredom	The feeling of being bored	8
Complexity	A sense or experience of convoluted intricacy	36
Consense	A feeling between two or more people of recognition and mutual understanding	10
Constrained	Feeling inhibited or confined by an external force	13
Curiosity	A wish to learn more about something	110
Danger	Being or feeling at risk of something perilous	13
Depressing	Lowering spirits leading to sad, gloomy feelings	6
Desire	Wishing for or wanting something	28
Fear	To feel afraid or to express fear	12
Feeling of space and distance	A feeling of being apart or remote from another individual, group or organisation in any context (geographical, status-based, wealth-based etc)	41
Frustration	The feeling of being thwarted in attaining goals by an internal or external force, or the expression of such a feeling	21
Identity	Separate or distinct existence	1
Isolation	Being or feeling set apart from others	23
Joy	Intense happiness; great pleasure	3
Nostalgia	Longing for something remembered	7
Responsibility	The feeling of being responsible	7
Supported	Feeling helped, maintained and strengthened	6
Threat	An indication of impending danger; a feeling that such an indication exists	11
Trust	To rely on a person, group or organisation with a feeling of confidence	6
Uncertainty	Unsure of something	16
Uncomfortable	Feeling physical or emotional discomfort	4
Unsupported	Feeling a lack of help or succour	13

Appendix 8 – Emotions Named by Sure Start Managers

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. admiration | 38. exasperation | 73. optimism |
| 2. aggrieved | 39. excitement | 74. outrage |
| 3. amusement | 40. exhaustion | 75. overwhelmed |
| 4. angry | 41. expectation | 76. pleasure |
| 5. appreciation | 42. exposure | 77. powerful |
| 6. apprehension | 43. failure | 78. powerless |
| 7. approval | 44. fear | 79. pride |
| 8. boredom | 45. fed up | 80. protective |
| 9. brave | 46. feel fantastic | 81. reassurance |
| 10. care | 47. feeling of space | 82. recognition |
| 11. careworn | and distance | 83. reluctance |
| 12. cautious | 48. felt like a fraud | 84. resentment |
| 13. cold | 49. felt motivated | 85. resignation |
| 14. comfortable | 50. frustration | 86. responsibility |
| 15. concerned | 51. grief | 87. rewarding |
| 16. confident | 52. ground down | 88. sad |
| 17. constrained | 53. guilt | 89. safe |
| 18. contentment | 54. happy | 90. self-congratulatory |
| 19. curiosity | 55. hate | 91. self-deception |
| 20. cynical | 56. hopeful | 92. sense of purpose |
| 21. depressing | 57. hopelessness | 93. stress |
| 22. desire | 58. hurt | 94. stuck |
| 23. despair | 59. impatient | 95. supported |
| 24. desperation | 60. impermanence | 96. surprise |
| 25. despondent | 61. initial | 97. threat |
| 26. disappointment | enthusiasm | 98. tired |
| 27. disapproval | 62. insecure | 99. trapped |
| 28. discomfort | 63. insignificance | 100. trust |
| 29. disillusionment | 64. interested | 101. uncertainty |
| 30. dislike | 65. internal struggle | 102. uncomfortable |
| 31. dissatisfaction | 66. isolation | 103. understanding |
| 32. empathy | 67. joy | 104. unfeeling |
| 33. encouragement | 68. liking | 105. unhappiness |
| 34. enjoyment | 69. loneliness | 106. unsupported |
| 35. enthralling | 70. love | 107. worried |
| 36. enthusiastic | 71. misery | |
| 37. envy | 72. nostalgia | |

Appendix 9 – Story Interpretation Coding Frame

1. Is this story? (May be something else – conversation, argument, feedback etc). Does it have features that identify it as story, e.g. a beginning, a middle and an end?

2. If it is story, what type of story is it and what does it do in the telling?

Could include:

- Experience stories (individuals' stories of events and the emotions they engender, which may be told to expound or illustrate views, share or attempt to validate experience, seek or offer support, express and create emotion)
- Personal stories (individuals' stories of their emotions, fantasies etc, which may be told to share feelings, seek support, express and create emotion)
- Group stories (group stories, which may be told to share and attempt to validate experience and/or feelings, confirm the extent to which views are mutually held, develop those views, seek and offer support, express and create emotion, create sense and meaning)
- Performance stories (stories that are performed rather than told, which may be done to engage the listener(s) more fully in the expression and creation of emotion)

Codes: experience story, personal story, group story, performance story

3. Whose voice is speaking? (Not coding for the actual speaker – but for other voices, some of which may be hidden voices.)

Codes: Voice – [may include: Sure Start manager, parent, story character, central government, storyteller, local government, staff, community, automated, impotent, internal, leader]

4. Is this character a typical example of an individual/group from a given category?

Codes: Typical character – [may include: bureaucrat, hero/heroine, villain, community (crowd/mob/chorus), audience, boss/leader, underling, mysterious stranger, supporting actor/actress, government, monarch, Sure Start manager, children, facilitator, lovers, anti-hero/heroine]

5. Is there an audience? (Not coding for the actual audience – but for other audience, some of which may be hidden audiences.)

Codes: Audience – [may include: community, central government, local government]

6. Could this story be a rehearsal for another performance?

Code: Rehearsal

7. Could this story be a polished performance of a well-rehearsed story?

Code: Rehearsed

8. If it's not story, is it about story? (i.e. talking about the stories themselves rather than the characters within them or the issues they raise)

Could be:

- Story making (talking about how stories were generated)
- Story changing (talking about different ways in which a story could be told, and what would change as a result)
- Story mixing (e.g. using a character from one story to make a point within the context of a different story, discussing common themes in two or more stories)

Codes: story making; story changing; story mixing